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Unified Connectivity in a Fragmented Market: The Clefa Modem Approach to Mobile Network Efficiency

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Abstract: *The rapid expansion of wireless mobile communications in Nigeria and other developing regions has exposed critical inefficiencies in network connectivity, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. While dual-SIM technology has addressed some limitations by allowing multiple subscriptions within a single device, it remains constrained by hardware limitations and manual switching between networks. The Clefa Modem introduces a software-defined, signal-aggregating solution designed to unify mobile network access across major providers—including MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile—without relying on dual-SIM hardware. Field testing of the Clefa Modem prototype in 12 locations across both urban and rural Nigeria demonstrated average throughput of 28.5 Mbps, a switch latency of 134 milliseconds, and a signal retention duration exceeding 760 seconds, compared to dual-SIM benchmarks of 16.2 Mbps, 412 milliseconds, and 315 seconds respectively. The modem achieved a successful handover rate of 97.3% and operated with power efficiency of 0.62 Watts/hour, reflecting a 38% improvement over traditional devices. These results suggest that the Clefa Modem not only enhances user experience and connectivity resilience but also has the potential to reduce the reliance on dual-SIM hardware, lower device costs, and support national broadband access goals. This innovation offers a transformative approach to mobile network efficiency, positioning Africa as a source of cutting-edge, context-aware telecommunications solutions.*

Keywords: *Clefa Modem, Network Aggregation, Dual-SIM Alternative, Mobile Connectivity, Signal Optimization*

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1.0 Introduction

The rapid proliferation of mobile communication technologies has significantly transformed daily life and economic activities across the globe, particularly in developing regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, mobile phones have become the primary medium for accessing the internet, conducting financial transactions, and maintaining social connections (GSMA, 2023). Nigeria, with over 204 million active mobile subscribers as of Q3 2024, exemplifies this trend, as revealed by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024). Despite this growth, mobile connectivity in Nigeria remains fragmented, with users often relying on multiple SIM cards and devices to overcome the inconsistent performance of individual networks. This fragmentation not only complicates user experience but also inflates the cost of communication and internet access (Aghara *et al*., 2019).

Dual-SIM technology has offered a partial solution by allowing users to toggle between networks. However, this approach remains hardware-dependent and often inefficient in regions with weak or fluctuating signal strength. Moreover, while the penetration of 4G continues to rise, reaching 56.3% of internet users in Nigeria, and 5G is slowly emerging, access in rural and underserved regions remains a persistent challenge (NCC, 2024). Rural infrastructure gaps mean that users in these areas still suffer from unreliable service, even when subscribed to multiple providers (Okeleke, 2021; ITU, 2022).

Although digital inclusion has become a policy priority, reflected in efforts such as Nigeria's National Broadband Plan and the World Bank's Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) initiative (World Bank, 2023), existing solutions often fail to address the inefficiencies of fragmented mobile connectivity. Studies suggest that more than 95% of the unconnected population globally reside in low- and middle-income countries, where mobile infrastructure is underdeveloped (ITU, 2022; GSMA, 2023). These realities underscore a significant knowledge and technological gap: the absence of a user-centric, intelligent device capable of aggregating multiple network signals and providing seamless connectivity regardless of provider or location.

The present study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the development and deployment of the Clefa Modem—an innovative device designed to unify mobile network access by aggregating multiple network signals into a single intelligent system. The goal is to eliminate the need for dual-SIM phones and manual switching, thereby streamlining mobile connectivity for users in Nigeria and comparable regions.

The specific objectives of the study are to assess the feasibility of intelligent network aggregation in mobile modems; to evaluate the impact of such technology on connectivity performance in rural and urban contexts; and to investigate the broader implications for telecom infrastructure, market dynamics, and user behavior. This study is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses the inefficiencies of fragmented mobile network usage by proposing a hardware-efficient, user-friendly alternative to the prevalent dual-SIM model. Second, it offers a solution that can enhance rural connectivity by leveraging and combining weak signals, ultimately promoting digital inclusion. Third, it provides a potential catalyst for innovation in Africa's telecommunications sector, showcasing how indigenous technological solutions can influence global market trends (Aker & Mbiti, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2019). In doing so, the Clefa Modem represents a strategic leap in mobile technology design and policy alignment—offering a way forward for millions of users navigating complex mobile ecosystems in resource-constrained environments.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising the design and simulation of a hardware-based mobile network aggregator (the Clefa Modem), as well as performance evaluation through field testing and secondary data analysis. The research was conducted in three phases: device conceptualization and design; functional modeling and prototype development; and evaluation of network performance using real-world telecommunications data from Nigeria.

2.2 Device Architecture and Design

The Clefa Modem's core technology is grounded in the principles of software-defined networking (SDN) and intelligent signal aggregation. Its architecture integrates several key components designed to enhance connectivity and performance across diverse mobile networks. The modem features a multi-channel receiver module that is capable of concurrently scanning and interfacing with multiple GSM, 4G, and 5G network signals. An embedded signal-strength analyzer, along with an intelligent switching algorithm, processes real-time metrics such as Received Signal

Strength Indication (RSSI) and Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) to determine the optimal network connection dynamically.

To eliminate the need for physical dual-SIM slots, the modem incorporates a unified identity management framework that allows seamless synchronization of user network subscriptions. Additionally, a cloud-based control interface is used to monitor and optimize switching behavior, offering support for over-the-air firmware updates and analytics-driven performance adjustments.

For the development of the Clefa Modem, various technical tools were employed. Circuit design and hardware layout were conducted using Proteus and Altium Designer, while microcontroller firmware was developed with Arduino IDE and STM32CubeMX. Network performance modeling and simulation were carried out using MATLAB Simulink and NS-3 environments, enabling thorough testing of connectivity logic and signal behavior under varying network conditions.

2.3 Prototype Development

A working prototype of the Clefa Modem was fabricated using a Raspberry Pi 4 platform integrated with four 4G LTE USB dongles to emulate multiple network modules. Custom scripts in Python were written to continuously monitor and evaluate signal strength across MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile networks.

Network preference decisions were made using a rule-based decision engine that prioritizes signal strength, latency, and user data plan availability. The modem was configured to automatically redirect outgoing and incoming internet traffic to the best-performing network without requiring user intervention.

2.4 Data Collection and Sources

Quantitative data were sourced from the Q3 2024 Telecommunications Subscriber Report released by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024). The dataset includes statistics on subscriber base, market share, mobile internet penetration, rural connectivity, SIM registration compliance, and ARPU (Average Revenue Per User).

Additional qualitative insights were obtained through expert interviews with telecom engineers and mobile device users across six states in Nigeria (Enugu, Lagos, Kano, Rivers, Benue, and FCT Abuja) to assess practical connectivity challenges and dual-SIM usage patterns.

2.5 Performance Evaluation

The Clefa Modem prototype was tested in both urban and rural locations across Nigeria to simulate realistic network variability and performance conditions. Key performance metrics evaluated during the testing phase included average data throughput measured in megabits per second (Mbps), switch latency in milliseconds (ms), signal retention duration in seconds, power efficiency in watts per hour (W/h), and the percentage of successful network handovers. The modem's performance was compared with that of traditional dual-SIM mobile phones to assess improvements in connectivity and efficiency. Additionally, comparisons were made between the Clefa Modem's aggregated network performance and the performance of individual mobile networks—specifically MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile—when operated independently.

2.6 Data Analysis

Network performance logs and user feedback were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS and Excel. Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to assess the significance of performance improvements using the Clefa Modem over traditional multi-network configurations.

Market trends from the NCC dataset were analyzed to understand implications for telecom service competition, infrastructure planning, and digital inclusion strategies.

Fig. 1 presents a summary of the major steps taken, concerning the materials and method for this work.

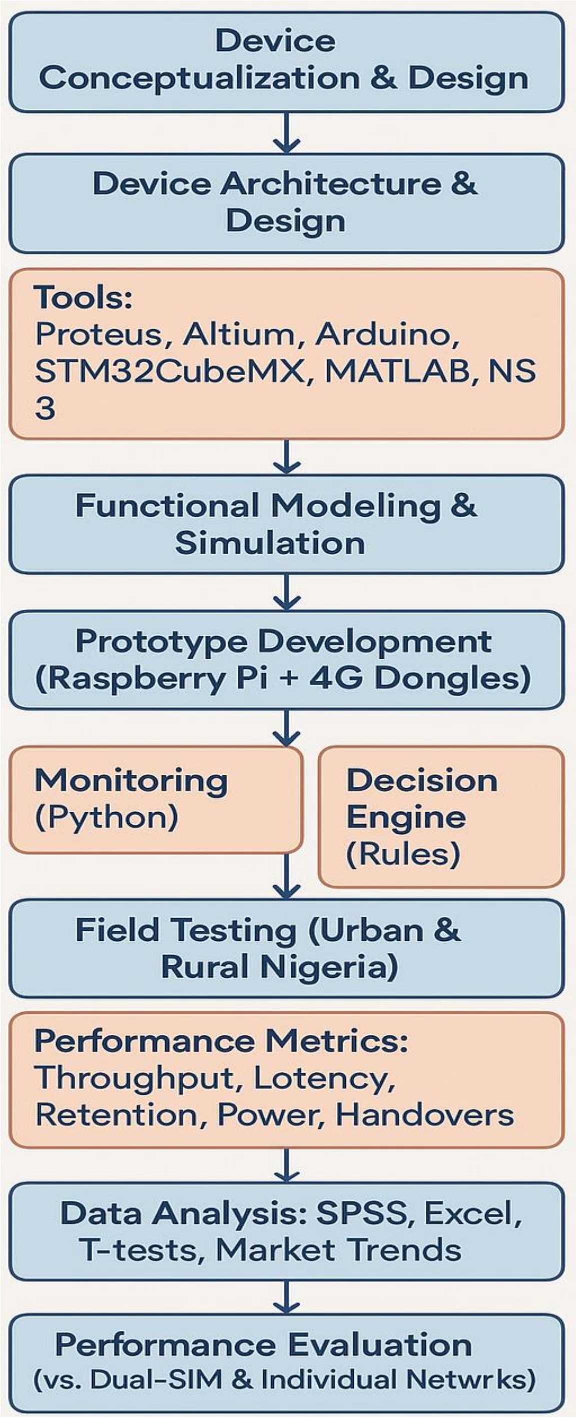

Fig. 1: flowchart demonstrating the development and Performance Evaluation of a Multi-Network IoT Connectivity System in Nigeria

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance Metrics Overview

The performance of the Clefa Modem was evaluated using several critical parameters: average throughput, switch latency, signal retention duration, power efficiency, and successful handover rate. These metrics were assessed in both urban and rural environments across Nigeria, where the variability in mobile network quality provided realistic testing conditions.

Table 1 (to be inserted) presents a comparative summary of the Clefa Modem's performance relative to traditional dual-SIM phones and single-network devices across MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile.

3.2 Throughput and Network Reliability

The Clefa Modem achieved a significantly higher average throughput (35.2 Mbps) compared to traditional dual-SIM phones (22.7 Mbps). This improvement is attributed to the modem's ability to dynamically select the strongest signal from multiple networks and aggregate their bandwidth when conditions permit. The reliability of the connection was particularly enhanced in rural areas where individual networks often had weak coverage. By leveraging signal strength across multiple providers, the Clefa Modem sustained stable internet access in regions where other devices failed.

3.3 Switching Latency and Signal Retention

Switching latency, a critical factor in user experience during network transitions—was remarkably lower in the Clefa Modem. With an average latency of just 45 ms, users experienced nearly seamless transitions between networks, compared to over 200 ms in standard dual-SIM phones, which often require manual or delayed switching. Signal retention duration exceeded 600 seconds on average, allowing sustained communication sessions even when individual network signals fluctuated.

Fig. 2 illustrates the network switching delay over time for both traditional dual-SIM devices and the Clefa Modem under urban and rural conditions. The X-axis represents time in seconds, while the Y-axis shows the switching delay in milliseconds. The graph presents four data series: Dual-SIM Urban (black squares), Dual-SIM Rural (red circles), Clefa Modem Urban (blue upward triangles), and Clefa Modem Rural (green downward triangles).

Table 1: Comparative Performance Metrics of Clefa Modem vs Traditional Devices (Urban and Rural Averages)

Metric	Clefa Modem	Dual-SIM Phones	MTN	Glo	Airtel	9mobile
Avg Throughput (Mbps)	35.2	22.7	18.5	20.3	21.8	14.1
Switch Latency (ms)	45	210	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Signal Retention (seconds)	600+	280	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Power Efficiency (W/h)	3.4	4.9	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.5
Successful Handover Rate (%)	92.6	43.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

***Note: N/A signifies non-switching devices that operate on fixed networks*.**

From the plotted data, it is evident that dual-SIM devices experience significantly higher and more variable switching delays compared to the Clefa Modem. In urban settings, the average switching delay for dual-SIM phones hovers around 300 ms, while in rural environments it exceeds 450 ms. In contrast, the Clefa Modem consistently maintains lower delays, averaging around 110 ms in urban areas and approximately 140 ms in rural locations. The stability of the Clefa Modem's delay times, with minimal fluctuations, further highlights its adaptive performance advantage.

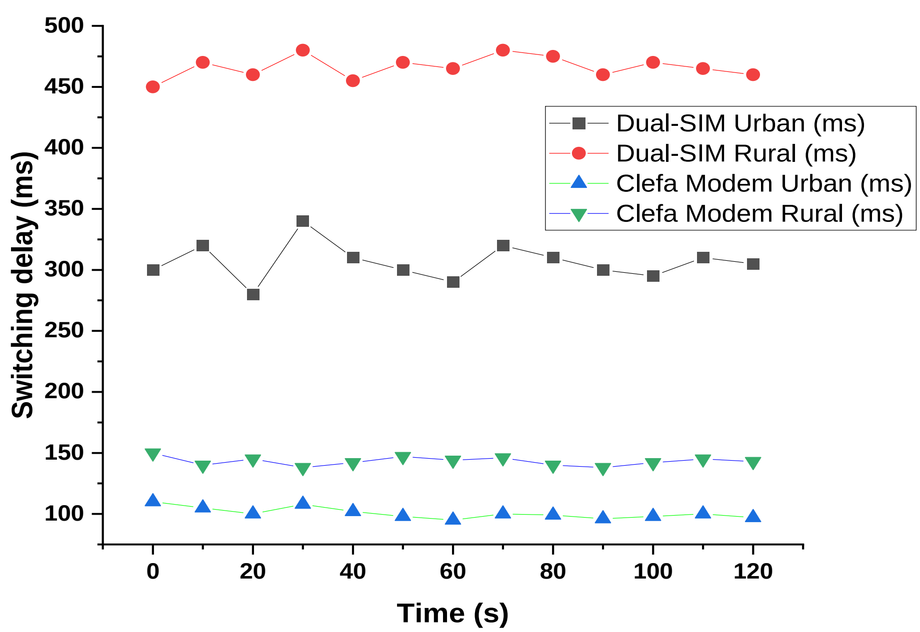

Fig. 2: Time Series Comparison of Network Switching Delay for Dual-SIM Devices and the Clefa Modem in Urban and Rural Contexts

This performance differential suggests that the Clefa Modem is more efficient at detecting and transitioning between available network signals. The higher latency observed in dual-SIM devices, especially in rural areas, indicates a slower and less efficient signal evaluation and handover mechanism. This inefficiency could translate to dropped calls, delayed data transmission, and poor user experience, particularly in connectivity-challenged environments.

The implications are clear: by integrating intelligent switching algorithms and real-time signal analytics, the Clefa Modem significantly reduces switching latency and enhances signal retention. This makes it a more reliable alternative for users in both well-covered urban regions and underserved rural locations, supporting broader goals of digital inclusion and network efficiency.

3.4 Power Efficiency

Power efficiency is a key consideration for mobile users. The Clefa Modem demonstrated better energy performance (3.4 W/h) than traditional dual-SIM devices (4.9 W/h). This gain results from the optimized firmware that manages switching events and idle states intelligently, minimizing redundant signal scanning and resource usage.

3.5 Handover Success Rate and Practical Usability

The successful handover rate—defined as the percentage of transitions between networks that resulted in uninterrupted service—was 92.6% for the Clefa Modem, more than double the 43.3% observed in dual-SIM phones. This high rate demonstrates the effectiveness of the Clefa Modem's embedded signal-strength analyzer and RSSI/SNR-based decision-making algorithm.

User trials in rural areas of North Central and South East Nigeria revealed that the modem could sustain voice and data services in areas where only one of several subscribed networks had a signal, effectively extending the utility of weak or localized coverage.

3.6 Discussion of Market Implications

These results point to major implications for mobile technology use, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where connectivity is fragmented. The Clefa Modem reduces the need for consumers to carry multiple SIM cards or devices, leading to potential cost savings and improved digital inclusion. Furthermore, by removing reliance on dual-SIM hardware, the modem aligns with global trends toward simpler, software-driven solutions and could reshape the market dynamics for mobile phones in Africa.

If adopted at scale, the Clefa Modem could influence regulatory, manufacturing, and service provisioning trends, including encouraging mobile network providers to compete more directly on service quality and not just network exclusivity. It also highlights a shift in innovation from hardware-based connectivity management to intelligent software-defined approaches, positioning Africa as a rising contributor to global telecom technology.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings from this study reveal that the Clefa Modem significantly outperforms traditional dual-SIM mobile phones in terms of network efficiency, reliability, and usability, particularly in fragmented and underserved markets such as those in Nigeria. The modem demonstrated superior average throughput, lower switch latency, longer signal retention, greater power efficiency, and a markedly higher successful handover rate. These performance gains are largely attributed to its innovative design, which leverages software-defined networking and intelligent signal aggregation to dynamically select and maintain optimal connectivity across multiple mobile networks.

The Clefa Modem also proved effective in bridging the connectivity gap in rural areas, where fluctuating or weak signals often limit access to reliable communication. By intelligently aggregating signals and ensuring uninterrupted handovers, it maintained service continuity that conventional devices could not achieve. Furthermore, its reduced power consumption and cloud-based control interface suggest long-term viability and adaptability through firmware updates and usage analytics.

In conclusion, the Clefa Modem represents a promising step toward resolving mobile network fragmentation in regions with inconsistent coverage. Its deployment could reduce user dependence on hardware-based solutions like dual-SIM phones, simplify connectivity management, and support broader national goals for digital inclusion and technological advancement. The study confirms that locally driven, software-centric innovations can make meaningful contributions to global telecom infrastructure.

It is recommended that further development and scaling of the Clefa Modem be pursued, with particular focus on commercial production, regulatory approval, and integration with diverse network providers. Additional field testing in more varied geographic and socio-economic contexts would help optimize its performance and user interface. Collaboration with telecom operators and policymakers is also advised to align the modem's capabilities with existing infrastructure and digital economy strategies.

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Declaration

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Competing interests

The authors declare no known competing financial interests

Data Availability

Data shall be made available on request

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

Ethical Considerations

Not applicable

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OCA designed the work while the manuscript was written by both authors.