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Customer Satisfaction in Senegal Telecom Expansion

Tafsir Alassane Ndiaye
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Tafsir Alassane Ndiaye

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Customer Satisfaction in Senegal Telecom Expansion

by

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MBA, Grantham University, 2010

BS, Institut Supérieur de Management, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Ineffective customer acquisition and retention strategies can negatively impact performance and business sustainability. Telecom managers who lack effective strategies to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure sustained business performance, may experience a decline in market share. Grounded in the customer retention management theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies successful telecom marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure sustained business performance. The participants were three marketing managers of major telecom firms in Western Senegal with at least 3 years of experience successfully managing customer service departments. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and secondary sources from organizational and government websites. The logical and sequential process for the data analysis was based on O'Connor and Gibson's five-step process. The three major themes identified were the importance of data, adaptive marketing as a customer retention technique, and promotional campaign strategies to increase market share. The recommendations include using the customer relationship management balanced scorecard and providing training to the team to increase customer acquisition and retention. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase company revenues, job security for employees, and employment opportunities in Senegal, thereby leading to increased prosperity in the community.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my heavenly mother Aissatou NDione and my father El Hadj Amadou Ndiaye, who set me up for success and who instilled in me a sense of honor and integrity. To my older brother El Hadj Moustapha Ndiaye, who put every possible effort into my academic success, and my sister Ndeye Khady Ndiaye, who continually plays the role of a mother. Specially dedicated to my wife Madeleine Sophie Gaye who spent many nights of solitude while I was up late to finish a paper, or she stayed alone some weekends while I went to my office to finish and submit a research paper. Special dedication to my champ Moustapha Al Rasheed Ndiaye the joy of my life, the torchbearer; my source of strength, support, and inspiration.

To my nephews Ibrahima Sarr (may his soul rest in peace) and Papa Ousmane Sarr who were like twin brothers to me. To my nephew Papa Massaer Ndiaye Navy vet. To my brother Moussa Ndiaye Libasse of Derkle, to my sister Ramatoulaye Ndiaye Bernice. To my sister-in-law Ndeye Fatou Niang who contributed to my well-being during my high school days.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study	3
Research Question	4
Interview Questions	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	7
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations	8
Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	9
Contribution to Business Practice.....	9
Implications for Social Change.....	10
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	10
Application to the Applied Business Problem.....	12
Building Customer Loyalty Through CRM.....	14

Service Quality.....	15
Service Failure	21
Customer Satisfaction	24
Customer Retention	28
Promotional Strategies.....	34
Customer Loyalty.....	43
Conclusion	46
Transition	47
Section 2: The Project.....	49
Purpose Statement.....	49
Role of the Researcher	49
Participants.....	51
Research Method and Design	53
Research Method	53
Research Design.....	54
Population and Sampling	56
Ethical Research.....	57
Data Collection Instruments	59
Data Collection Technique	62
Data Organization Technique	67
Data Analysis	68
Step 1: Organizing the Data.....	70

Step 2: Finding and Organizing Ideas and Concepts	71
Step 3: Building Over-arching Themes in the Data.....	72
Step 4: Ensuring Reliability and Validity in the Data Analysis and in the Findings.....	72
Step 5: Finding Possible and Plausible Explanations of the Findings	73
Reliability and Validity	73
Reliability.....	74
Validity	75
Transition and Summary.....	77
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	79
Introduction.....	79
Presentation of the Findings.....	80
Theme 1: Importance of Data	81
Theme 2: Adaptive Marketing as Customer Retention Technique.....	84
Theme 3: Promotional Campaign Strategies to Increase Market Share	87
Applications to Professional Practice	93
Implications for Social Change.....	96
Recommendations for Action	97
Recommendations for Further Research.....	98
Reflections	101
Conclusion	102
References.....	104

Appendix: Case Study Protocol147

List of Tables

Table 1. Literature Review Sources Count	12
Table 2. Importance of Data	82
Table 3. Adaptive Marketing as Customer Retention Technique.....	85
Table 4. Promotional Campaign Strategies to Increase Market Share	88

List of Figures

Figure 1. Word Cloud Density.....	81
Figure 2. Word Cloud Density of Importance of Data	84
Figure 3. Word Cloud Density of Adaptive Offering on Customer Retention.....	87
Figure 4. Word Cloud Density of Effect of Promotion Campaigns to Increase Market Share	93

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Different factors have contributed to a dynamic and highly competitive market in the Western Senegal telecom sector. The steady increase of the population as a direct consequence of rural exodus, the 2007 new government regulations of the telecommunication industry that favor investments, and new competitors, are all factors that make retaining customers and acquiring new clients in the Western Senegal telecommunication market more challenging than before. The different business development programs that telecom firm leaders implement to generate profits are necessary to ensure business sustainability. Retaining customers and acquiring new clients constitute important components of companies' main strategy to stay in business. In this study, I explored the different strategies from the experience of telecom managers as well as the literature to understand the diverse aspects of customer acquisition and retention.

Background of the Problem

The telecommunication industry in sub-Saharan Africa has an estimated coverage rate of 38% and is projected to cover 87% of the market by 2025 (GSM Association, 2019). With a steady increase of the compound annual growth rate of 6%, the constant increase of mobile phone users represents a revenue growth opportunity for the telecommunication industry. But a company's sustainability and success are correlated to the business leaders' ability to retain customers and acquire new clients (Yeboah-Asiamah et al., 2018). In competitive growing market environments, telecommunication marketing managers will try to acquire and retain as many customers as possible through

customer brand loyalty initiatives (Lyll & Kumar, 2018). In Western Senegal, telecom customer retention and acquisition strategies are mainly focused on offering promotional services, such as discounts, rebates, bundles, and other innovative approaches. Despite investing in promotional products, the market share of some telecom companies has steadily declined. In this research study, I explored the strategies and techniques that successful mobile telecom marketing managers in Senegal have used to retain existing customers and acquire new clients to increase market share.

Problem Statement

In Senegal, the telecommunication sector is the third largest contributor to job creation which employs 3,456 permanent staff and 1,944 temp workers (Agency for the Regulation of Telecommunications and Posts, 2020). However, despite sub-Saharan Africa having a compound annual growth rate of 4.6% and 167 million new subscribers (GSM Association, 2019), companies in Senegal continue to show a declining trend (Agency for the Regulation of Telecommunications and Posts, 2018). The general business problem is that telecommunication service providers in Senegal offer different attractive incentives to customers, but the market share of some companies is not increasing. The specific business problem is that some telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal lack effective strategies to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure sustained business performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers use to retain customers, acquire new clients, and

ensure a sustained increase in business and market share. The target population consisted of three marketing managers of major telecommunication companies in Western Senegal who held at least 3 years of experience in successfully managing customer service departments. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by providing information that leads to an increase in company market share and revenues. The ensuing gains and prosperity may manifest in an increased contribution to the local community. The study results and knowledge may also contribute to the community welfare, especially in tandem with a corporate social responsibility policy.

Nature of the Study

Research methods include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method. Qualitative research is an appropriate approach to studying a wide range of customer behaviors (Mohajan, 2018). With the qualitative method, the researcher can use interviews to have a better understanding and explanation of the subject (Levitt et al., 2017). Some researchers use the inductive nature of qualitative research to explore and interpret the significance of a specific context (Levitt et al., 2017). Qualitative research was appropriate to acquire the depth insight into exploring the techniques and strategies that telecom managers use to retain and grow customer base. Quantitative research was not suitable for this research study because it is based on numerical data (Rahman, 2017). Mixed-method is a combination of qualitative and quantitative and is often time-consuming (Mckim, 2017). The time required to conduct a data analysis, data synthesis, and data interpretation in a mixed-method study (Shorten & Smith, 2017) did not fit the intent of this research study.

A case study design was the most pertinent for this study among the different qualitative study designs. With a case study, a researcher can define and clarify the existing case from the perspective of the sample population studied and the insight they may provide from personal experiences (Mohajan, 2018). Grounded theory was not appropriate for this study because in using ground theory researchers usually develop new conceptual theories from data collected (Birks et al., 2019), and the purpose of this study was not an attempt to develop a theory. Ethnographic research was also not suitable because the objective of this study was not to discover the rationale behind common behavioral patterns (see Birks et al., 2019). A narrative or phenomenological design in which information is collected through interviews or observation was not suitable for the research, because the two approaches are more of storytelling of social events and the interpretation of immediate experiences (Manen, 2017a).

Research Question

What strategies do mobile telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain and acquire new customers?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain existing customers?
2. How do you identify your potential customers?
3. What strategies have you used to implement a successful promotional campaign?
4. What issues have you experienced when implementing marketing and promotional campaigns?

5. How do you address the issues encountered in the course of implementing of marketing strategy?
6. What strategies have you used to get feedback from customers once the promotional campaign is over?
7. How do you relate customer feedback to the success of the promotional campaign?
8. How do promotional campaign outcomes impact the performance and profitability of your company?
9. What techniques do you use to identify adequate promotional campaign tools?
10. How do your promotional campaigns influence customer satisfaction and retention in your company?
11. How do promotional campaigns and customer perceptions increase your company's market share?
12. What else can you add regarding your company's strategies to promote its products which we have not discussed?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework delineating this qualitative case study was the customer retention management theory initially postulated by Dawkins and Reichheld (1990), who contended that a surge in customer retention rate directly translates into an increase in customer value. Extending the customer retention management theory, Ahmad and Buttle (2001) asserted that leaders of the traditional marketing era placed more focus on acquiring new customers to increase market share; hence, those leaders

may have possibly missed the benefits of retaining customers. Along with service quality, customer retention is considered the main profit generator for businesses (Hossain et al., 2017). The ultimate strategy of company leaders could be to find the most optimal approach to satisfy and retain customers who contribute to the organization's profit and sustainability (Deshpande & Deshmukh, 2017). Company leaders might consider customer retention as a direct result of customer satisfaction and a possible outcome of an increase in sponsorship (Okonkwo et al., 2020).

The customer retention management framework aided in the exploration and interpretation of the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain and acquire new customers. Telecom managers can increase favorable customer perceptions of service quality by providing improved and reliable service because it is an important determinant of customer loyalty (Izogo, 2017). The intense competition in the telecom industry, along with demanding customers, creates a dynamic mobile service environment and customer retention problem (Deshpande & Deshmukh, 2017). To stay competitive, marketing department managers must constantly monitor blogs and social media to collect customers' impressions and needs (Deshpande & Deshmukh, 2017). The findings of the monitoring of social media usually trigger the necessity for an in-depth study to better understand the commonality of perceived expectations of different telecommunication customers and the behavioral choices for telecom services.

Operational Definitions

Customer churn: The customer's decision to change service provider as a result of dissatisfaction from a current provider or simply to opt for a service deemed cheaper or of better quality (Under et al., 2020).

Customer effort score (CES): A measure of customer repurchase intention based on experience from the company's promptness to address clients problems (de Haal et al., 2015).

Customer retention rate: The number of customers lost over a period of time and is calculated by the percentage of lost customers against existing customers over a quarterly or annual period, without adding new customer acquisition (Deshpande & Deshmukh, 2017).

Net promoter score (NPS): A measurement tool used by company leaders to gauge loyal customers' level of satisfaction taking into account areas of best performance as well as areas of lower performance (Fisher & Kordupleski, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are widely accepted theoretical, unverified ideas with perhaps based on no solid foundation but are useful for research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first assumption was that participants would offer detailed and clear information in response to the interview questions. The second assumption was that the use of a semistructured interview could get participants to provide honest and bias-free responses that could eliminate any potential lack of data accuracy. The third assumption was that

participants would share the mistakes that lead to an unsuccessful customer retention campaign.

Limitations

Limitations are uncontrolled situations or set boundaries to the scope of the study that can adversely affect the validity or generalizability of the study findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). This study was about exploring the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to formulate and implement business development and marketing strategies to ensure customer acquisition and retention. The limitations of the study were related to the COVID-19 pandemic that required remote interviews, which limited direct observations and opportunities only available in live interviews. The profile of managers to interview was also a limitation to the possibility of accessing valuable information available with personnel who did not fit the profile of the target population description.

Delimitations

Delimitations are intentional, exclusive, and inclusive decisions made by the researcher to set boundaries during the initial preparation phase of the research; delimitations are the result of the researcher's specific choices and controls (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The study was delimited to include only promotional campaign activities conducted during a specific fiscal year. Telecommunication firms propose different product and service offerings; the study was delimited to the customers of a specific service. The study was thus delimited by (a) the research topic, (b) the intended

location of the study, (c) the nature of products offered, and (d) the number of managers to interview.

Significance of the Study

The study findings may be valuable to a business in the sense that customer acquisition and retention contribute to financial gain for service providers. Customer retention is the foundation of sustainable competitive advantage and profitability, a strategy used by firm leaders to protect market share from the competition (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). Firm leaders use customer retention techniques to avoid a decrease in market share as a consequence of customer churn (Ascarza et al., 2018). Customer retention is a result of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Singh, 2019). Satisfied customers may become loyal customers who commit to a repeated purchase, which contributes to an increase in the revenues of a firm (Diaz, 2017).

Contribution to Business Practice

Telecommunication providers could adopt the findings of this study to create quality products and service offerings as well as develop successful marketing strategies for better customer satisfaction. Improving service quality may lead to customer satisfaction, customer retention, and a contribution to organization success (Al-Hashedi & Abkar, 2017). The recommendations from the study findings may aid telecommunication managers with the knowledge to improve service quality in the continuous quest to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Among the different factors that influence customer satisfaction, reliable network connectivity is often most associated with service quality (Munyanti & Masrom, 2018). The findings of this study

may provide information that can be used to increase customer satisfaction as telecom leaders endeavor to the challenges of maintaining reliable network connectivity.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study may be used to improve targeted and lasting solutions to meet customer satisfaction, which could result in the Senegalese telecommunication subscribers receiving improved quality services. The findings may also lead to improved revenue and economic prosperity, making positive contributions to society and the community. Improved strategies may also translate into better customer care, or enhanced loyalty programs, leading to significant customer satisfaction and retention.

Further, the telecommunication service industry is the third largest contributor to job creation in Senegal and considerably contributes to the national gross domestic product (Agency for the Regulation of Telecommunications and Posts, 2018). Growth in companies' activities and revenues means an increase in the employment rate for the benefit of the community. Revenue growth also means more taxes to pay to the government, which can be used to improve the community. Different small business owners who are suppliers or retailers could also benefit from the expansion of telecom service providers' activities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Customer retention is usually considered to be at the center of the telecommunication industry; firms stay competitive through suitable acquisition and retention strategies and churn prevention (Izogo, 2017). The customer retention management framework was the underlying theory that represented the conceptual

framework. In this literature review, the different strategies and techniques of customer retention and acquisition, as well as product promotion, are discussed. This section of the study also consists of an analysis of literature about the concept of promotional strategies. Promotional strategy is considered central to the understanding of the dynamic of customer acquisition and retention (Yahya et al., 2019).

The search terms used to generate the topics necessary to conduct this literature review were *service quality, customer perceived value, customer relationship management, customer loyalty, service failure, customer retention, and customer satisfaction*. To conduct a further analytical discussion, this literature review included documents such as the firm's internal standard operating procedures regarding customer acquisition and retention as well as promotional products, and peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles verified through Ulrich's Periodicals Directory (57th edition). The following online databases were also explored for this review: Academic Search tools, ProQuest, Science Direct, Emerald Management Journals, and Sage Journals. In a few online peer-review journals, the automatic notification system was prompted to send personal email alerts when new relevant articles were published on the website. Books related to methodologies and management theories, enterprise promotion programs, and materials about entrepreneurial characteristics were also used. The aim was to stay compliant with the institutions' research study rubric and requirement, where at least 85% of the references should be from peer-reviewed sources and published within the last 5 years. Table 1 is a count of the references used in this research study.

Table 1*Literature Review Sources Count*

	2017 & Later	2016 & earlier	Total for source	% peer reviewed of total documents
Peer-reviewed journals	227	19	246	
Government publications	2	1	3	
Total peer-reviewed or government	229	20	249	91.2%
Other journals	3	0	3	
Books	15	3	18	
Total other documents	3	0	3	
Total sourced documents	250	23	273	100%
% sources less than 5 years old in 2021	91.6%	8.4%	100%	

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The objective of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain clients and grow their customer base. The customer retention management framework was used to address the central research question of this study. Though managing customer retention constitutes a challenge to companies' executives, customer relationship management (CRM) leaders, as well as academics, have long agreed on its crucial impact on business success (Ascarza et al., 2018). Customer retention influences a company's financial status in different ways (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). An increase of 1% in customer retention rate is estimated to produce a company benefit growth of 5% (Moenardy et al., 2016). In addition, 20% of the company's current customers will generate 80% of the company's future revenue (Hwang, 2016). Thus, companies will make more profit by retaining customers than by acquiring new customers (Lemmens & Gupta, 2020). To develop a

sustainable business, firm leaders can create a CRM program to build a loyal customer base from product differentiation, which would likely increase customer value (Mohanty & Das, 2017). To be successful, company leaders also need to recognize the importance of differentiation to separate firm products and services from the comparable offerings to customers (Eggert et al., 2018). With sustainability in mind, company leaders undertake the challenging task of balancing policy, human resources, and technology to achieve the goal of retaining and acquiring new customers (Ascarza et al., 2018).

Ensuring business growth and sustainable business success are the main challenges that leaders of the telecom sectors contend with and strive to solve regularly (Johnson et al., 2017). Leaders of the telecom industry in Western Senegal could use this study's findings about customer retention and acquisition to develop better strategies in the same subject. The last 20 years preceding 2021 have seen significant population growth in Western Senegal, which has been an opportunity for new telecom service providers to consent important investments to meet customer expectations. The market and level of competition have been so dynamic that different investors have not stayed active long enough and some firms were simply absorbed through mergers or acquisitions by bigger companies. In such a competitive growing market environment, customer loyalty is essential to sustain competitive advantage and develop a customer base (Saleky et al., 2018). Leaders of new companies tend to spend tremendous amounts of money in the telecommunication market of Western Senegal. The leaders devote extensive investment in the promotion of products and services than in infrastructures to support claims of reliability of service.

Building Customer Loyalty Through CRM

Loyal customers are consumers who repeatedly purchase the service of a company despite attractive offers from other companies (Abu-Alhaija et al., 2019). Scholars have proposed different strategies to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, customers are more likely to remain loyal when pleased with the attitude of the service provider employees (Girard et al., 2017). Employee–customer relationship is an important mechanism to increase customer loyalty and retention for customer satisfaction and company competitiveness. Understanding the growing importance of customer relationships to better serve customers, several company leaders have implemented CRM (Kalani et al., 2018). CRM is a tool for business leaders to classify, manage, and retain valuable customers as well as increase buying habits (Das et al., 2018; Upendar & Kumar, 2019). Personalized service offerings may therefore increase customer loyalty through creating a long-term relationship (Mohanty & Das, 2017; Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). Satisfaction is the main driver of customer loyalty (Chuah et al., 2017). An appropriate CRM program can lead to improved customer satisfaction and ultimately an increase in the customer retention rate (Fouad & A-Goblan, 2017; Boerman et al., 2017). A positive company–customer relationship sustains customer satisfaction and motivates customer repurchase intention and choice behavior (Bagozzi et al., 2017; Iglesias et al., 2018). When front line personnel maintains a positive relationship with customers, business leaders could reach the company objective of meeting customer satisfaction and create a loyal customer base.

Service Quality

Service quality reflects customers perceived company superiority (Delima et al., 2019) and is the difference between customer expectations and what was delivered (Hadi et al., 2019; Sarkhel & Osman, 2020). Along with customer satisfaction, service quality constitutes an important determinant for company competitiveness and growth (Palladan & Palladan, 2018). Service quality is the main cause of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Al-Hashedi & Abkar, 2017; Bhattacharjee et al., 2018; Diaz, 2017; Jamaluddin & Ruswanti, 2017; Kasiri et al., 2017; Ramamoorthy et al., 2018; Sharma & Kumar, 2019). Customer satisfaction is more important than profit-making because customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty and to business growth (Yaqub et al., 2019). Firm leaders can develop effective strategies to retain customers and acquire new clients by increasing customer satisfaction through better service quality (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017; Atiyah, 2017). Successful companies are known to be constantly improving the quality-of-service offerings to meet customers' satisfaction (Palladan & Ahmad, 2019).

Service quality in the context of the telecom industry is usually measured through the lens of network reliability, customer support, and fee schedule. Service quality is used to obtain customer satisfaction and to achieve business sustainability (Dewi, 2019). In the telecommunication industry sector, scholars and academics from different regions of the world have explored the influence of service quality on customer loyalty (Belwal & Amireh, 2018). Customer demands for service quality become more difficult to satisfy in the highly competitive telecommunication market because they have a variety of alternatives to choose from (Yaqub et al., 2019). In such an environment of competition,

telecom firm leaders should consider service quality as a differentiation factor and work on improving the quality of service rendered because it leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Alamsyah & Rachmawati, 2018; Delima et al., 2019), but mainly to company financial performance (Mohtasham et al., 2017). In the context of the Western Senegal telecommunication market, companies providing a sustained service quality may expect a loyal customer base despite the competitive market environment of low switching costs and number portability.

Introducing the following subsections, elements such as empathy, assurance, reliability, and responsiveness are considered the main dimensions of service quality that can lead to customer satisfaction and to customer loyalty (Demir, 2017, 2019). Customers chose a service provider based on empathy, assurance, reliability, and responsiveness; thus, firms should continuously work to improve those service quality dimensions (Kwame et al., 2019). Firm leaders should evaluate the influence of the strategies on each dimension of service quality (Kaisiri et al., 2017).

Empathy

One aspect of customer satisfaction resides in meeting customer expectations through developing empathy in customer relations (Prakoso et al., 2017). Empathy is the special attention provided by firm employees to understand customer choices and preferences and deliver personalized customer service (Setiawan & Sayuti, 2017). Empathy makes the customer feel cared for and valued (Sarkhel & Osman, 2020). Front-line employees such as front desk staff should be trained to develop empathy and active listening skills to meet customer expectations, improve customer satisfaction, and gain

customer loyalty (Balaji et al., 2017; Dewi, 2020). Employees who develop knowledge, skills, and an intuitive awareness of customer perception of service quality increase the firm's ability to provide superior service which could lead to customer loyalty (Ong et al., 2018; Zopiatis et al., 2017).

Because front-line staff are important to promote customer satisfaction and improve customer retention (Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017), leaders of the telecom industry of Western Senegal should appoint skilled front-desk employees who are knowledgeable of the firm products. The responsibility of company leaders is to design and establish conclusive procedures to motivate front-line employees and increase productivity (Siddiqui & Sahar, 2019). A motivated and engaged employee is a problem solver who may contribute to the firm financial well-being and sustainability (Yap & Kee, 2017). Customers may also be empathetic toward firm personnel regardless of employee skillset (Tsarenko et al., 2019). In contrast, non-qualified personnel will not provide any competitive advantage as an outcome of customer retention (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019).

Assurance

Assurance is also an important factor that could influence customer satisfaction (Ngwenya, 2017; Prakoso et al., 2017). Assurance is the trust that a customer in company employees to be courteous, knowledgeable, and ready to handle customer inquiries (Dewi, 2020). Assurance is a combination of both knowledge and empathy. When front desk employees are knowledgeable and courteous, they make customers feel confident about the quality of the service provided and may become satisfied customers. To improve assurance and turn a satisfied customer into a loyal customer, company leaders

need to be proactive by collecting customer feedback, both positive and negative, to improve service offerings (Eckert, 2017; Hawkins & Hoon, 2019; Kim et al., 2017).

In the telecom industry, assurance is the leading dimension of customer satisfaction (Palladan & Ahmad, 2019). Telecommunication firm leaders who seek to improve customer loyalty should work on increasing trust and assurance levels of the customer (Palladan & Adamu, 2019). In the telecom industry, assurance involves more than service quality to encompass data safeguards, as many customers want to be assured that a company can protect personal information (Raghavan et al., 2017). Prompt treatment of customer concerns expressed through feedback is an appropriate way for firm leaders to enjoy an increased customer trust and assurance. Adversely, a lack of company assurance ruins customer trust and could lead the customer to start looking for another provider, even with similar or marginally different or better service (Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017).

The notion of assurance is mainly important in emerging markets of developing countries characterized by consumers with limited income and reduced buying power. In the context of the Western Senegal market, limited earnings lead the majority of consumers to look for affordable but reliable products; customers want to spend money on a worthwhile product and service relevant to personal needs. In such an environment, the challenge of service providers will consist of keeping the balance of providing affordable products while maintaining a high-quality service.

Reliability

Reliability is the capacity of a company to deliver the promised service with accuracy (Mohammed & Shahin, 2020). Reliable service quality is the key to company sustainability and is also the justification for higher product costs (Ngwenya, 2017). Customer satisfaction is a direct outcome of reliable service (Izogo & Izogo, 2017). Customers are loyal to companies that can provide reliable service (Belwal & Amireh, 2018; Izogo, 2017; Palladan & Ahmad, 2019). In the context of the Western Senegal telecom environment, reliability holds a high position on the scale of customer satisfaction. Due to migration in developing countries, many young people have moved from the rural areas to the Western side capital city of Senegal but also to overseas for those who could travel. The people who have undertaken internal migration under the rural exodus phenomenon and the emigrants who have traveled to a foreign country all rely on new technologies to stay in contact with family and friends. A reliable service network that can provide fast connectivity is what mainly drives customers' expectations.

Responsiveness

Also correlated with the delivery of service that meets expectations, reliability associated with a prompt service delivery bears the notion of responsiveness that can make a substantial difference in a competitive environment. Responsiveness is the company's willingness to help customers and provide fast service (Setiawan & Sayuti, 2017). Customers choose service providers based on the responsiveness of both the front-line personnel and the company network (Dhasan et al., 2017).

The development of new technologies has contributed to the creation of a new profile of customers. Responsiveness takes another meaning with Generation Y customers, as they tend to be less patient and more demanding. Generation Y customers are high profile users of social media, well informed, and desire reliable interconnectivity, but they are rarely loyal customers (Moreno et al., 2017). More than 50% of Generation Z and millennials aged between 18 and 21 old may not commit to one product even when they like it; in contrast, 65% of Generation X and 75% of baby boomers are repetitive buyers of a product they like (King, 2018). Because of an acute disparity in Generation Y's commitment to a brand, the service industry has endured a significant loss of revenue in the last 10 years, representing a 15 to 30% decline in customer satisfaction and a \$10 billion annual loss per year (Ascarza et al., 2016).

Commitment is among the most important elements that constitute the foundation of relationships and that may influence customer brand loyalty and repurchase intention (Kemp & Poole, 2017). To build a long-term relationship with customers, company leaders need to adopt an adequate service failure response strategy (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). The way company leaders handle service failures often has a direct impact on customer perception of firm reliability (Iglesias et al., 2018). Customers change service providers when they experience poor service quality and a lack of commitment (Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017). A dissatisfied customer tends to look for another service provider (Dewi, 2020). Successful service recovery becomes fundamental to preventing the negative effects of service failures and could serve as a first step toward creating satisfied and loyal customers (Yaquib & Halim, 2018).

Service Failure

In service activities, namely the telecommunication industry, customers are among the most likely to experience dissatisfaction than in other sectors. Every telecommunication customer has experienced at some point call drops or an Internet disconnection while conducting a personal or private business. Service failure is a gap between expected and delivered service, a short-term or long-lasting service disruption that discontinues customer experience leading to customer dissatisfaction (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). Some customers are more prone to express frustration than others and do not hesitate to report a bad experience to the service provider. Customers who experience service failure may sometimes feel angry to an extent that they either spread negative word-of-mouth, leave for another service provider (Koc et al., 2017), or display negative emotions (Baladji et al., 2017). Despite the many preventive measures to guarantee continuous operation, service failure is not considered avoidable (Van Vaerenbergh, 2019; Yaqub et al., 2019). Service providers who place a high priority on the provision of superior quality service to customers are even subject to service failures (Ellyawati, 2017). Whatever the cause may be, firm leaders' responsibility is to promptly resolve service failures to the satisfaction of customers (Koc, 2018).

Consequences of reduced company profits have led some company leaders to consider service failure as an internal crisis to make front-line employees aware of the importance of service failure and its potential negative effects on company performance and customer perception of reliability (Andirin et al., 2017). Because service failure can lead to customer defection, firm leaders have frequently acknowledged the need for

customer retention through successful service failure resolution strategies (Chuah et al., 2017). A dissatisfied customer may have a passionate decision that refrains them from re-purchasing company products (Bagozzi et al., 2017) which could negatively affect firm revenues (Hult et al., 2019). The way company leaders handle a service failure situation often influences a customer's decision to stay with the same company or change service provider (Iglesias et al., 2018). The reason customers switch service providers may be attributed to the inability of telecom managers to efficiently anticipate and handle situations of service failures (Kalani et al., 2018).

For many years, researchers have spent significant number of hours to identify and address the issue of service failures (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). Recognizing a service failure and taking accountability constitute a first step toward solving a service failure to customer satisfaction (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). Business leaders should provide justification and accept responsibility rather than offer excuses to blame others (Rasoulilian et al., 2017). When a frustrated customer is given a valid reason for a service failure and a timely re-performance, they are more willing to accept an apology, which can avoid an undesirable reaction (Hogreve et al., 2017).

An inference may be drawn that telecom leaders in the Western Senegal market should promptly communicate service disruption to avoid that customer call in to complain about a service failure. When customers reach out to a company to inquire about a service failure and must wait for an extended time before receiving an explanation, they may be frustrated and even look for another service provider. Customers should be at the center of any system that companies develop to implement

effective service failure resolution strategies (Rai & Appiah, 2019). Because the sustainability of a business is contingent on the satisfaction of the customer, leaders of telecom firms should enforce departments solely dedicated to handling customer complaints to spontaneously address customer dissatisfaction. From the contention of researchers and practitioners, to prevent or minimize service failures, company leaders should integrate an efficient service recovery process into firm strategic planning (Homburg et al., 2017). As service disruption is sometimes inevitable, company leaders should endeavor to respond to a customer complaint in a diligent, meticulous, and professional manner to meet customer perception of service quality.

Firm newer customers often react negatively to poor service failure recovery compared to customers who have been longer with the company (Béal et al., 2019). Customers who have been with the company for a long time are found more tolerant of service failures than customers with a shorter experience. Consumers who are satisfied with the service recovery are more loyal to the service provider and could even engage in positive word-of-mouth communication in favor of a company, and perhaps also, recommend the products of the firm to other potential customers who may be influenced by testimonials (Yaman, 2018). An adapted service failure recovery strategy contributes to customer satisfaction and can result to customer retention.

Customers involved in the resolution process through co-creation of service recovery may feel satisfied with the resolution and be open to re-patronage (Haege et al., 2017). Co-creation is a way for company leaders to make customers feel associated with the company and feel like co-owners, which could make them company proponents and

loyal customers (Preikschas et al., 2017). Leaders of the telecom industry in Western Senegal could use the principle of co-creation in a situation of service failure to engage customers in the resolution process, which could improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are of superior importance to firm financial performance (Hill & Alexander, 2017). Customers are satisfied with a service failure resolution when they receive some sort of compensation, such as bonus points or discounts. Satisfaction could be a determining factor that leads to the customer becoming loyal to the firm (Hadi et al., 2019). Loyal customers contribute to the improvement of company's competitive advantage as well as company financial well-being (Tartaglione et al., 2019). The financial success of a company could reflect in high-quality products and services by way of meaningful investments that promote customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction

Economic activities are mainly based on exchanges between two or more parties and consist of offers and demands, leading to the satisfaction of all parties involved in the transactions. Some activities incur more challenges than others to meet consumers' expectations, and targeted strategies and tactics do not always guarantee customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the state of emotion when customer expectations coincide with service received (Hossain et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction is the result of affordable quality products and services that match expectations (Nuridin, 2018). Central to a company's marketing strategy is customer satisfaction, which constitutes a substantial comparative advantage in highly competitive markets (Leninkumar, 2017). Customer satisfaction has long been central to long-term customer relationships

(Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017), and the main driver of customer retention (Chuah et al., 2017). The concept of customer satisfaction involves a variety of notions to consider, such as customer commitment, co-creation, and social media involvement that place customers at the center of company revenue creation strategies (Preikschas et al., 2017).

The Western Senegal telecom market has one distinctive feature, which makes it a very homogeneous market regarding the implementation of a marketing strategy. The latest census report indicated that 77% of the population is less than 35 years old (United Nations, 2018). For market segmentation and targeting purposes, it should be easier to communicate with this audience, considering their familiarity with the digital and electronic technology world. To provide a high-quality service that meets customer expectations and satisfaction, it may be important for firm leaders to use CRM to have a better perception and interpretation of customer lifestyle (Ali, 2019).

Through CRM, firm leaders can collect valuable information from customers in the form of feedback, which could serve decision-makers identify areas of improvement to enhance service offerings (Chahal & Bala, 2017). Improved service quality leads to customer satisfaction (Mady, 2020). From the review of literature in this study, it may be assumed that leaders of the Western Senegal telecom market could find ways to better capitalize on customer comments. The market intelligence information collected may provide the impetus for telecom industry leaders to invest in front-line personnel training, but also in infrastructure development that could improve the ability to provide reliable quality services. The process of feedback should not be a one-way transaction, as leaders of the telecom firms in Western Senegal could provide tailored activity reports to

customers regularly, which in return could increase customers' sense of loyalty and satisfaction. Collecting feedback is a way for a company to have a better understanding of customers' perception of the firm achievement, notably in each of the four P quadrants of the marketing mix (Eckert, 2017).

Quality customer service through a superior customer retention management strategy and customer interaction are major contributing factors to customer satisfaction and retention (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). Based on the findings of the importance of the representation of generation Y, Z, and millennials, the strategy perhaps maybe for telecom leaders to build marketing strategies aiming at satisfying the younger generations through brand loyalty with the objective of developing lifetime customers. Customer satisfaction appears to be important in the efforts on customer retention. In a competitive market, customer satisfaction contributes to retaining customers and to increasing market share (Tandon et al., 2017).

In the context of the telecom market, there is limited literature in the area of customer satisfaction and telephone industry marketing information, trends, and other dynamics. Assessing customer satisfaction might require a survey to define different customer profiles and determine the type of products appealing to each profile for customer satisfaction and retention. Satisfied customers invariably contribute to company sustainability through repeated purchases and increased company revenue. Customer satisfaction is among the best attributes of firm achievements and serves to protect company sustainability (Dewi, 2020). Customer satisfaction has a direct effect on customer retention and an immediate positive consequence on company earnings (Cho et

al., 2017). As suggested by Jahan et al. (2019), the level of customer satisfaction is an appropriate tool to enhance customer retention and could be necessary for a company to benefit from referrals.

Research conducted in the telecom industry by Bandi and Dharmaraju (2019) indicated that customer satisfaction derived from customer perceived values, and product quality would lead to customer retention and loyalty. The growing competition in the telecom industry is an opportunity for customers to have increased bargaining power; consequently, company leaders should constantly work on improving customer satisfaction and trust (Hafez & Akther, 2017). To stay competitive and increase market share, company leaders should improve service quality to raise customer satisfaction and retention (Palladan & Palladan, 2018). Product quality and customer-perceived service quality usually have a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Bandit & Dharmaraju, 2019). Service quality positively influences customer satisfaction and can lead to customer loyalty (Kasiri et al., 2017).

The finding from the extensive research undertaken that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty may not be consistent in a monopolistic market such as Western Senegal, where the switching cost is low with a possibility of mobile number portability. The decrease or non-existence of switching costs, along with number portability, is what facilitates customers use of the same device across service providers, which may constitute an obstacle to customer loyalty (Smith, 2020). In such a market, customer satisfaction may not necessarily lead to loyalty and may barely affect brand fidelity (Hadi et al., 2019). In their argument, Hadi et al. added that customer satisfaction needs to be

given a broader view to include convenience, expectations, customer service, personal relationships, rewards, reputation, and community outreach.

In the telecommunication industry, researchers have proven that customer satisfaction is a determinant of customer loyalty, which in return may influence customer retention (Diaz, 2017). Customer satisfaction is a driver of customer retention (Hawkins, 2019). Company leaders may promote a long-term relationship with customers by establishing a good retention management strategy with concomitant quality service offerings, to achieve lasting customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction accomplished through sound quality service offerings is critical for firms to enhance customer loyalty and retention (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017).

Customer Retention

Company leaders rely on competitive advantage strategies to secure customer retention (Uner et al., 2020). The creation of competitive advantage constitutes a challenging endeavor for firm leaders (Ascarza et al., 2017), but customer retention will play an important role in service providers' survival in the future (Fernandes & Pedroso, 2017). Several academics and marketing specialists have conducted extensive studies about customer retention and related antecedents (Ascarza et al., 2017). In very competitive markets, firm leaders constantly look for strategies to increase customer retention (Datta et al., 2018). Marketing practitioners agree that retaining current customers is more profitable for firms than acquiring new customers (Mabkhot et al., 2017). In a buyers' market with more players, customers may decide to stop doing business (customer churn) with a given service provider without prior notification when

they find better offerings (Uner et al., 2020). In dealing with customer retention, researchers have sustained that a declining market growth or a highly competitive market are the two main factors that can make customer retention a difficult endeavor.

In the context of the Western Senegal market, customer retention complexity is a consequence of acute competition. A competitive market should be the reason for business leaders to focus on customer retention strategies as it constitutes a critical challenge to a constructing competitive advantage (Ascarza et al., 2017). Company profit and sustainability is closely linked to customer buying habit, firm leaders who fail to retain customers may run the risk of going out of business. Some companies previously were forced out of the Western Senegal telecommunication market because they lacked effective strategies to retain customers, failing to dedicate adequate attention to what constitutes the main source of business sustainability. A high-quality service could be a way for mobile network service providers to attract and maintain a customer base (Kwame et al., 2019). But in the highly competitive telecom sector, customers are offered a variety of service providers to choose from, which makes retaining and acquiring customers more challenging (Ascarza et al., 2018).

The importance of customer retention is emphasized by Preikschas et al. (2017), who stated that firm leaders sustain customer long-term commitment and re-patronage through customer satisfaction and retention. The customer retention management framework used as a strategic tool could be useful in framing the company-customer relationship strategy, thereby providing telecom leaders a better understanding of customer behavioral propensities and choices. The achievement of customer retention

entails a strong company-customer relationship that could spur better customer satisfaction that contributes to an increase in company revenues and lowered promotional spending. The knowledge and identification of customer choice and preferences that enhance customer satisfaction require that company leaders depart from a product-focused practice to expand into a stronger customer relationship strategy. The pivotal role of customer retention in company efforts is in increasing customer relationships (Ascraza et al., 2017). The important purpose of customer retention strategies is for firm leaders to maximize economic and noneconomic benefits through a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with customers, using the conduit of improved customer satisfaction (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017).

In the Western Senegal telecom sector, to develop customer relationships, company leaders often support communities in the form of sponsoring by enrolling an entire suburb in some sort of activities that create continuous interaction between the population and the company sponsor. The strategy usually consists of signing an agreement that spans several years during which a team (soccer, basketball, and other sports) of the target community receives a set amount each year for the identified activity. With such a strategy, a brand image is usually established, which serves to support customer loyalty among adults. With the presence of the company logo throughout the neighborhood, younger generations can grow up remembering the company sponsor logo. Customer knowledge, awareness, and relationship with a brand, all contribute to shaping customer's mental perception and emotional attachment to a firm (Srivastava and Rai,

2018). A strong brand image acts as a cognitive-behavioral model that can lead to customer fidelity and retention (Espinosa et al., 2018).

The determination of customers' true needs and expectations is fundamental to the achievement of customer satisfaction and retention. Customer retention is considered to have a direct positive impact on customer satisfaction which may be to the benefit of a firm. With as little as a 1% increase in customer retention, a company could improve profit by 5% (Moenardy et al., 2016). Referring to the Pareto principle, Hwang (2016) further suggested that 80% of company benefit is generated by 20% of the company's existing customers. Telecommunication firm leaders seek to retain as many customers as possible through customer loyalty and brand loyalty initiatives (Kumar & Lyall, 2018). Organizations should promote the brand image to improve customer mental perception and symbolic association of company products to unique qualitative attributes (Ashraf & Niazi, 2018).

The establishment of effective strategies to retain customers becomes even more challenging in the ever-changing telecommunication sector (Deshpande & Deshmukh, 2017). A slight increase in customer demands has a clear positive effect on management's strategies to retain customers and acquire new clients. Important factors to consider about customer retention are the recurrence of purchase and the time of the relationship between the customer and the company (Hamilton et al., 2017). To establish retention strategies, telecom leaders could research historic data and information about the primary reasons that have resulted in customer churn and strive to improve the quality-of-service offerings (Ascarza, 2017). When organization leaders can identify the

reasons for customer attrition, they may create a tailored customer retention strategy (Carrera et al., 2018). The main challenge of customer retention does not consist of determining a profile of high-risk customers prone to depart, but rather to identify customers who are more responsive to the retention efforts (Ascarza, 2018).

To allude to the issue of customer retention, Tidey (2018) propounded that a loyal customer is five times less costly than a newly acquired customer. Retaining an existing customer is five times more challenging than enrolling a new customer (Jamaluddin & Ruswanti, 2017). Customer defection is costly to the organization; to optimize company financial performance, retaining existing customers becomes more important than acquiring new customers (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2019). Company leaders tend to spend a considerable amount of money and time to acquire new customers, although perhaps not adequately enough to create and maintain a long-term relationship with existing customers. Business leaders may find strategic and business value in adopting a customer-centric strategy that augurs a stronger relationship with customers and that would possibly lead to better customer satisfaction, which would yield customer retention and the issuance of associated rewards. Customer retention is more than just financial the non-financial gain may help improve company competitiveness and productivity (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017). The non-financial benefit of customer retention from satisfied customers includes spreading positive word-of-mouth and possibly referring new customers (Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017). To increase customer retention, firm leaders could improve CRM strategy to achieve stronger customer relationships (McCroy et al., 2017).

In the Senegalese telecommunication market, word-of-mouth and the effectiveness of firms' promotional campaigns often play an important role in people's decision to choose a service provider. Consumers join a service provider based on friends and family recommendations or the effectiveness in the outreach of ongoing promotional campaigns. The Senegalese market call rates are affordable, and the network coverage is quite efficient for the different service providers, while users rely on recommendations from family members or friends to enroll in a given firm plan. Word-of-mouth from existing or former customers influences the decision of new customers to engage with a service provider (Yaman, 2018). The statement is in line with Generation Y, Z, and millennials consumers characterized as relying more on electronic word-of-mouth comments posted on social media or company websites than in advertisements or other promotional tools.

Regardless of the size or nature of activities, company leaders should consider sales promotion to be among the best tools for customer acquisition and retention (Yahya et al., 2019). Promotional offers could keep a customer from leaving a company (Devriendt, 2021). To improve customer retention, telecommunication firms need to maintain front-line personnel more engaged in interacting with consumers (Braun et al., 2017). With an increased front-line personnel engagement, telecom business leaders in the Western Senegal telecom market may reap profitability dividends from a better relationship with the employees. Front line personnel are more productive when they have open communication with managers and feel supported by their leaders. To improve customer satisfaction, firm leaders should observe dominant elements that influence

employee performance (Dainty & Sinclair, 2017). Telecom leaders in Western Senegal could conduct an internal review of key performance indicators (KPI) to enhance employee performance but also to enhance customer satisfaction.

Firm leaders who establish a stronger customer relationship might realize improved customer retention (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). The more company employees are involved, the more productive they become, making the service delivery more effective (Young et al., 2018). Customers are more willing to do business with a company when they are happy with the products or service offerings and when they have rewarding experiences with front-line personnel (Yahya et al., 2019). Poor customer service is the cause of more than 70% of customer churn (McCrorry et al., 2017). To prevent customer churn, firm leaders may benefit, as may be inferred from the foregoing analysis, from implementing effective strategies that influence customer loyalty.

Promotional Strategies

Brand image has a positive influence on customer perception of service quality and customer long-term patronage (Espinosa et al., 2018). With a strong brand, company leaders may retain existing custom and increase market share (Fournier & Srinivasan, 2018). Firm leaders consistently seek to establish a stronger brand image through consistent loyalty and reward programs. In the Western Senegal market, telephone company leaders regularly propose reward programs by offering bonuses or discounts in the occasional 24-hour increments. Different social and religious activities constitute platforms for the congregation of a large number of disciples in specific cities of Senegal; those ceremonies are often used as pretexts for telecommunication firm leaders to offer

promotional programs tailored to the nature of the event also astutely called event marketing and promotion.

The leaders of the Western Senegal telecom industry use different marketing channels to promote products. Firms should be consistent with the nature of the message delivered and should convey the same information across the different mediums (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2017). The fast-changing and alluring technology leads the customers to change provider based on service quality, cost of service, or newer features (Smith, 2020). To acquire a leadership position, company leaders should keep abreast of new technologies and be prompt to appropriately leverage these advantageously in marketing and customer outreach (Hadi et al., 2019).

Consumer involvement and satisfaction with reward programs generally influence prompt purchases and promote loyalty (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2019). Making a loyal customer to become a lifetime member is of considerable benefit to the firm as well as a way of preventing customer churn (Baxter, 2018). A loyalty program is a good practice for telecom leaders to achieve customer satisfaction as well as to improve retention rates. In the Western Senegal telecom market, promotion programs are often available to new and frequent users. Incentives or loyalty programs should be limited to existing buyers as a means of rewarding their patronage and to improve the long-term relationship (Silalahi et al., 2017).

Retention campaigns could be ineffective or even produce an adverse effect when not implemented properly (Ascarza, 2017; Ascarza et al., 2018). On the basis that customers respond differently, Ascarza (2017) opined that firms should target promotions

efforts on customers who are more sensitive to the campaign rather than trying to stop the potential churners. To run an effective promotion campaign and retain customers, Ascarza (2017) proposed a three-step strategy consisting of: Testing the capabilities of the firm through a retention test phase, segregating the different profiles of customers, and tailoring a promotion strategy that targets customers who are more sensitive to the promotion campaign.

Different technology platforms are usually customizable and available for firm leaders to use and execute a communication strategy. With the development of new technologies, firms extensively use internet-based and interactive online applications to promote product offerings. Telecom leaders could provide a better customer experience by using new technologies to improve CRM and retention (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). New technologies often represent improved platforms for businesses to offer tailored products in the effort to build and surpass customer expectations while increasing benefits (Peppers & Rogers, 2017). Through company websites or social media, business leaders can develop digital word-of-mouth marketing, which may be conducive for customers to provide feedback and spontaneously receive a response about a specific product (Schlagwein & Hu, 2017). Telecom firms in the Senegalese market often send free text messages and emails to inform customers of ongoing promotions. The promotional offers are usually discounts on purchases or bonuses that can go from 100% to 600% of the amount spent by the customer to buy a prepaid card. The promotions may target purchases performed online, from a kiosk, or from both. The offers are often valid

for 24 hours on the day the promotion is emailed, or sent through instant messenger to the customers, which brings many users to rush to buy prepaid cards.

The large access to mobile phone technology by the population usually makes instant messenger a convenient channel to reach the target market (Shadkam, 2017). Mobile Apps are more suitable for the objective of improving brand awareness because they are less invasive than instant messengers and more used than regular internet browsers (Tao & Edmunds, 2018). In the recent past and in 2021, telecom firms that want to retain customers and acquire new clients are advised to use mobile internet technology as a marketing tool (Mullatahiri & Ukaj, 2019).

Loyal customers enjoy fidelity programs as tokens of appreciation for their continued patronage (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). The research findings of Rehnen et al. (2017) revealed that customers who benefited from loyalty programs increased participation when the received rewards were based on frequent customer use of firm social media platforms; hence, firm leaders should communicate more often with customers through social media platforms. Social media constitute a conversation platform where customers and firm representatives can exchange (Guha et al., 2018).

To run a competitive and lucrative business, leaders need to recognize the necessity to differentiate product offerings through a better understanding of customer needs to meet and surpass existing levels of customer satisfaction (Eggert et al., 2018). The Western Senegal market is very challenging for companies at different levels; firms are faced with increasing rivalry due in part to the arrival of new competitors that affect every segment of companies marketing mix identified by Kotler (1967) as composed of

product, price, promotion, and place. The marketing mix is fundamental to the success of the company's strategy toward maintaining sustainability (Kumar, 2018).

Product

The product is what connects the company to the clients; it serves as a bridge between the two parties. The appreciation that customers have for a product or service will be crucial to the perception of a company. To make a lasting positive perception in customer's mind, company leaders usually need to differentiate from the competition by providing attractive and convincing offerings (Mohanty & Das, 2017). Product differentiation constitutes a constant challenge to overcome as business leaders continually innovate to beat the competition but also to satisfy customers. The best way for a company to survive in such a highly competitive market environment is through diversified and innovative offerings. Firm leaders differentiate product and service offerings to establish and sustain a competitive advantage, as well as to improve customer satisfaction and retention (Ogake, 2017). The sustainability of a company is usually contingent upon the company leaders' ability to offer differentiated products and services that may benefit customers but also provide a distinct and unique competitive advantage (Randhawa et al., 2017).

Telecom firms are known to be customer-centric businesses that implicate a unique customer relationship approach to carry out all value creation strategies to retain customers (Mahapatra & Kumar, 2017). In the Western Senegal market, telecom firm leaders tend to offer the same type of products, and the differentiation could mainly be in the service delivery and the approach to make the customer feel unique by means of

empathy. The strategy of service differentiation usually makes a substantial and long-lasting contribution to brand sustainability (Bundy, 2017). Leaders of the telecom industry may derive value from providing an alluring customer experience to create loyal customers. Customers with behavior loyalist attitudes are more susceptible to increased re-patronage (Peng & Li, 2019).

Price

Customers are always looking for the best combination of quality products and services at the lowest possible price. Price is among the main features that influence customer decision to buy a product (Cruz-Milan, 2021). Firms' leaders should be prudent and set a reasonable price, but should also offer discounts to motivate customer re-patronage (Cruz-Milan, 2021). Delivering quality product and service contribute to building a lasting and positive relationship that maximizes customer and company experiences. Customer perception of price fairness has a direct impact on customer satisfaction levels that can either increase or decrease (Leinsle et al., 2018). Based on the results of Konuk's (2018) research, it may be evident that customers are eager to pay more when they have a positive experience with a company's offerings.

Price estimation constitutes a strategic decision that firms frequently put in place to generate revenues and sustain profits (Kumar & Lakshmi, 2019). In that exercise, firm leaders face the challenge of juggling the marketing mix to find a suitable balance that will not affect company profit objectives while meeting customer satisfaction. The statement holds mainly true in environments such as the Western Senegal market, where customer buying power is restrained by low income. In such a setting, managers could

apportion investments to deliver adequate quality level products at prices that do not compromise customer perception of good quality (Baxter, 2018). Injudicious marketing, products could be segmented and stratified in a way that different bundled packages are offered to meet customer expectations based on demographic and other criteria, which consider customer buying power and the position of the company in the market. To achieve customer satisfaction, marketing leaders generally use market segmentation to offer tailored products and services (Bruwer et al., 2017).

In the Western Senegal market, firm leaders could carefully consider the market condition before pricing products. The pricing decision is an important part of the corporate management and firm relationship marketing strategy (Trihatmoko & Purnamasari, 2019). The nature of the product and market target could get company leaders to implement one of the two main recommended pricing strategies which may include skimming and penetration (Rekettye & Liu, 2018). Skimming pricing consists of a firm entering a market with a high price and then progressively reducing the price (Zhan & Chiang, 2018). With wealthy customers in mind, firm leaders could adopt the skimming pricing strategy to influence customer perception of high quality and provide them with the perception of saving on a high-quality product when the prices decrease. An astute pricing strategy can produce important cash flow in a short period of time while creating a perception of high quality in the mind of the customer, as well as fulfilling the purpose of retaining customers. Telecom leaders could conversely implement or consider penetration pricing in highly populated areas with lower income,

making products more affordable and giving the customer an impression of getting a good deal.

Adopting a winning pricing strategy requires that leaders consider a variety of factors (Kienzler & Kowalkowski, 2017). The factors include finding a real need for the product, the economic environment, and mainly the position of the competition (Rekettye & Liu, 2018). To accomplish sustainability constitutes the objective of firm leaders but is not an end goal. Sustainability consists of a series of permanent actions with no end in sight, but firm leaders can claim competitive advantage when a positive profit margin is maintained (Gek & Lok, 2019).

Promotion

The action of promotion usually consists of different actions initiated by firm leaders to inform consumers of new products or an improvement in the form of new features added to existing products. With the development of new technologies, digital and social media have become the new tools to run promotional campaigns (Cole et al., 2017), offering options to deliver quicker and more personalized messages. Defining a profile that describes consumer's lifestyle may be critical to the promotion strategy to adopt. Based on consumer professional activity, leaders should adapt firm promotion strategies to customer lifestyle and try to understand customer perception of sales promotion, which will be conducive to tailor service offerings (Yahya et al., 2019). Marketers could also target days of the week to maximize a specific form of promotion. Lo et al. (2016) explored the relationship between promotion and day of the week and the impact on the number of purchases and found that in the restaurant industry, for example,

promotional programs offered on Thursday yield a higher return. In the Western Senegal market, some companies offer free data services between the hours of midnight and 06 am daily. The free offer works very well for security guards or individuals working the night shift, who possibly spend most of the day sleeping. Some customers, considering the offer, barely buy pre-paid service and wait until the night free time slot to make phone calls using free call Apps such as WhatsApp or Skype. Company leaders could lower the price at night or even propose lower prices to customers who purchase a certain number of prepaid services rather than offering the service for free.

Place

Based on knowledge and some study findings that indicate that customer purchase intention can be influenced by the proximity of service, business leaders frequently aim at implementing point of sales closer to customer location. Firm leaders adopt distribution strategies to make firm products available to customers (Trihatmoko et al., 2018). In the context of Western Senegal, the increase in demography has exponentially influenced the cost of housing, making the most strategic locations hard to find for firms to establish but unreasonably pricey when available. Finding a strategic location for firm leaders becomes another challenge that is added to the business strategy dilemma. New customers reside mainly in the suburbs of Western Senegal, where the rate of inhabitants is higher and buying power is lower than in upscale neighborhoods. Although having more people, companies that establish stores in the suburbs take important risks mainly associated with security with different financial implications. Companies established in low-income suburbs usually face different financial obligations; for instance, insurance companies

charge a high price, and costs associated with the security needed to enforce and safeguard company assets. Firm leaders face the challenge of creating a competitive advantage through building a successful connection with the community. In the process, leaders strive to safeguard company assets but also attempt to offer doorstep services to allow customers to top up credits as needed. The threats are real; recent social unrest witnessed a rampage of many stores in different suburbs of Western Senegal.

The 2020 pandemic Covid-19 has shown the capacity of the resiliency of the world; many businesses have turned to teleoperations to have the majority of employees work from home (Ma, 2021). Telecom leaders could minimize physical presence in areas where conditions do not meet minimum safety requirements to develop online platforms to conduct real-time interactions with customers. Considering the level of knowledge of the target population, the implementation of such platforms will certainly require an extensive campaign of information and education on the use of the platforms, but also dedicated personnel readily available to support customers whenever a need arises. The regular interaction between highly trained personnel and a customer base that gets answers as needed will also be an opportunity to retain clients and increase customer loyalty.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty has different meanings, among which re-purchase intention is based on customer past purchase experiences that translate into a favorable behavior toward a given service provider (Fida et al., 2020). Loyalty consists of a customer's own choice to repeatedly purchase from a firm and to disregard offers from competitors

(Farida & Ardyan, 2018). Customer loyalty is among the main factors that affect company growth and sustainability and is often recognized as a direct outcome of customer satisfaction (Fida et al., 2020; Yaqub & Halim, 2017). Customer satisfaction plays a major role in bridging service quality and customer loyalty (Hadi et al., 2019). To maintain sustainability and increase company profits, firm leaders may derive benefit in securing customer loyalty, especially of value, in the intensely competitive telecom industry. Company leaders seek customer continued patronage by using loyalty programs and by making firm products and services more appealing than the competition (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2019). Appealing loyalty program is a good way to attract customers, but when customer enjoyment improves from consuming the product, the satisfaction may increase. The more customers are satisfied with a loyalty program, the longer they stay with the company, which may improve company sustainability (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2019). Company leaders who want to guarantee a sustainable business may need to realize the importance of service quality and the correlation with customer satisfaction (Palladan & Palladan, 2018).

An increasing number of players and well-informed buyers make customer loyalty a challenging objective to achieve by telecom leaders. In the context of the Western Senegal telecom market, to stay competitive and promote growth through customer loyalty, leaders should establish effective strategies that lead to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction reflects a company's comprehensive achievement of customer expectations (Switala et al., 2019). Customer

satisfaction constitutes in that sense a strong mediator of customer loyalty (Leninkumar, 2017).

Many customer satisfaction studies conducted in the service industry are mainly found and observed as undertaken in the developed countries of the West. The concept of loyalty needs to be contextualized to consider different aspects that characterize a developing country such as Senegal, where cultural and economic environments constitute the main driving factors that influence the customer buying decision. With limited income, many customers look for cheaper services; it is not uncommon to find a customer who gets services from two different providers: One for the cheaper call rate and another provider for the lower data cost. Company leaders often maneuver between services offered to balance costs; one service provider might be cheaper than the competition in terms of call rates, but another service might be more expensive in terms of data rates. In such an environment, total brand loyalty becomes almost impossible to realize (Morgan & Govender, 2017). Firm leaders should consider delivering packages that can appear affordable to customers yet provide the necessary margins to offset costs for the company.

The majority of decision-makers of telecom companies in developing countries have acquired education and experiences from developed countries, which may make them somewhat detached from the social reality of the local environment that could lead to indifference. Insensitivity to customers' true expectations is a contributing factor to companies' lack of growth (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). A closer relationship with customers allows company leaders to provide services that meet customer expectations

for customer satisfaction and retention (Bahri-Ammari & Bilbihan, 2019). Different researchers agreed that customer satisfaction has a significant effect on customer loyalty (Smith, 2020).

Conclusion

The literature review undertaken in this study represents the analysis of strategies that leaders of the Western Senegal telecom industry use to retain and acquire customers. An important number of journalists in other areas of marketing and business performance uncovered multiple aspects of the intended area of study. In the Senegalese telecom industry, several decision-makers and marketing managers have thoroughly studied the problem and proposed different solutions. The issue of retaining and acquiring new customers continues to be a persistent problem difficult to resolve, perhaps because of the different dynamics discussed herein and attributable causes presented.

Undertaking this case study provided an opportunity to review the way leaders of the telecommunication industry explore different avenues that could lead to better strategies to improve customer satisfaction. Ultimately, firm leaders pursue three major goals: Sustainability through long-term survival, maximum profits guaranteed by a sustained cash flow, and a leadership position established on a strong market share. The three goals could be achieved when telecom leaders can execute strategies that may get customers to possibly depart from the notion of a comparative analysis mindset and be fully satisfied with the firm products and services, which require intensive work, involving a thorough analysis of the marketing mix (Trihatmoko et al., 2018).

Transition

Section 1 of this qualitative case study includes a summary of the foundation and background of the research topic as well as the definition of the problem and purpose statements. Consecutive to the statements, brief discussions of the research method and design were developed in the nature of the study portion of the research, followed by the research question that aligns with the specific business problem and purpose statement. A series of open-ended interview questions elicited the required depth of information to explore and understand the phenomenon of customer acquisition and retention in Western Senegal, which contributed to the existing levels of knowledge of the phenomenon. The overarching research question was listed, followed by an explicit description of the underlying conceptual framework, which served as a theoretical lens for this research study. Further to that, operational definitions presented herein explained some technical jargon and terms used in the study. To place the study findings in context, the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were developed as well as the significance of the study in which the reasons that the study findings may be of value to businesses were discussed. To convince readers of the depth inquiry, a literature review was subsequently conducted with a discussion of the content of relevant literature, including critical analysis and synthesis of customer retention and acquisition.

In Section 2, the details presented included the research process and the methodology of data collection techniques and instruments to be used to further explore the data organization portion along with the reliability and validity of the study. Section 2 represented a discussion of the role of the researcher and the role of the study research

participants. A discussion on sampling rationale and size was presented, also included a discussion on the ethical aspect of the research, as well as expounding on the measure to ensure credibility and dependability.

Section 3 entailed presenting the findings and potential research gaps in the research, with proposed recommendations, from the analysis of the data, with a discussion on opportunities for future research. An in-depth discussion of the applications to business practice as well as application to social change was further conducted. A summary statement of the study concluded the research study.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, a restatement of the purpose of the study is provided followed by a description of my role as a researcher in the data collection process. A detailed description of the eligibility criteria of participants is further discussed as well as the research method and design of the study. The rationale for the sample population is explored before addressing the ethical aspect of the research. A description of the techniques used to collect and organize data are further provided followed by an analysis of the data. The reliability and validity of study findings are also addressed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers use to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure a sustained increase in business and market share. The target population consisted of three marketing managers of major telecommunication companies in Western Senegal who held at least 3 years of experience in successfully managing customer service departments. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by providing information that leads to an increase in company market share and revenues. The ensuing gains and prosperity may manifest in an increased contribution to the local community. The study results and knowledge may also contribute to the community welfare, especially in tandem with a corporate social responsibility policy.

Role of the Researcher

For the credibility of the research findings, researchers need to be aware of their role in the research process (Clark & Veale, 2018). My role as a researcher was to

conduct the interviews and collect the data in a way that information was clear, concise, and applicable to the phenomenon under study. Qualitative researchers are often considered the first research instrument (Mohajan, 2018). Researchers with a background similar to the research topic might be able to offer a better interpretation of participant responses to the interview questions (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Experience in customer service has made me aware of customer care issues; the awareness of the topic was an advantage in the research process as well as in the interpretation of data collected. However, the knowledge of the researcher can also constitute a negative bias, such as confirmation bias, question-order bias, or leading questions and wording bias (Dooly et al., 2017). Researchers should also avoid the two extremes of data interpretation that can lead to data integrity deviation: over-interpretation and misinterpretation (Dooly et al., 2017). To mitigate research bias, constant awareness was maintained throughout the data collection process. Different steps were taken to reduce bias, such as (a) awareness of possible bias, (b) note-taking during interviews, (c) participant checking or confirmation of meaning (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Triangulation was also used for increasing credibility and minimizing biases (Fusch et al., 2017; Noble & Heale, 2019).

Another role of the research is informing participants of the objective of the research to obtain their full consent (Dooly et al., 2017). Participants were notified of the option to opt out of the research at any moment of their choosing without any adverse consequence. The ethical standard requires that researchers respect participants by demonstrating justice and by providing participant benefits (Praveen & Showkat, 2017). Section 4e of the ethics and *The Belmont Report* protocol has indicated that researchers

respect and preserve participant identities throughout the research process if protecting anonymity does not impact the validity of the findings (National Institute of Health, 2014). Participant informed consent and assessment of the intent in terms of risk and benefits related to the study is required (Winter, 2017) and may often contribute to the improvement of the ethical procedures. Study participant profiles and privacy were protected, and personal identities were kept confidential.

To conduct this research study, open-ended, semistructured interviews were planned. The rationale for a semistructured interview was to facilitate the study participant managers to respond freely and with in-depth insights and personal participants' experiences in managing promotional campaigns. To reach the level of desired depth and sincerity in responses, qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). With open-ended questions, researchers can access more details and achieve a better understanding of the topic (Weller et al., 2018). Researchers should also consider the important skills of a good interviewer such as engaging with relevant follow-up questions that may bring participants to freely relate personal experiences (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). An interview protocol promoted consistency and served as a roadmap through the interview process (Yin, 2018).

Participants

Participants can contribute to a better understanding of a research subject by providing appropriate and subject-related information (Creswell, 2018). The profile of study participants must align with the research purpose (Yin, 2018). In a qualitative case study, participants need to have experience and a close association in some way with the

phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). To be eligible for this research study, participants needed to be marketing managers of major telecommunication companies in Western Senegal with 3 years of experience in successfully managing customer service departments. The selected managers were also required to have experience in the formulation and implementation of marketing and promotional strategies, with a record of monitoring customers' responses to promotional campaigns.

The strategies for gaining access to participants included social media networks such as LinkedIn, where researchers can find emails of eligible participants and further request a phone appointment. To find potential study participants, in the form of decision-makers, the professional profiles and email addresses, social media, and LinkedIn could be indispensable and effective professional networking sources for recruitment (Claybaugh & Haseman, 2013). To establish a working relationship, I explained the purpose of the study by sending an email with the informational letter in the body of the email and requested to work with the person in charge of the area of the study or the authorized personnel. An authorized representative is someone who can decide on behalf of the organization (Masterson & Cormican, 2013). Participants individually received an informed consent form to read and sign and were allowed to decide if they wanted to participate. For an effective data collection process, the researcher needs to create an ambiance of trust and confidence with participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Research Method and Design

The qualitative research method with a single case study design was an appropriate approach to conduct this study. This design helped address the research question and fulfill the objectives of the proposed study. Specific strategies were implemented as well to ensure data saturation.

Research Method

To identify a specific research method, the researcher should be guided by the objective of the topic and the study's main research question (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method was used for this study because it was suitable to seek deep and meaningful insights from the strategies that mobile telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers and acquire new clients. The qualitative method is more conducive to understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals who have experienced it (Mohajan, 2018). The researcher additionally can collect detailed information about the subject (Levitt et al., 2017).

A quantitative methodology was not selected because it is useful when the focus is on analyzing numerical variables (Apuke, 2017). When using a quantitative method, the researcher tends to interpret the meaning of the numbers rather than the data collected (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The interpretation of the numbers is often mainly against hypothetical premised and hypothesized statements and is not usually based on facts (Becker, 2017); consequently, the quantitative method was not suitable. Mixed methods research was also not suitable because it is the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods with the objective of in-depth understanding and validation (Schoonenboom &

Johnson, 2017). I did not use a mixed-method to conduct this research as it was also time-consuming (McKim, 2017); the quantitative aspect of the mixed method was not suitable, as the aim was to glean a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, which was the exploratory intent of the study.

Research Design

A case study design is appropriate for a qualitative researcher seeking to explore a phenomenon (Bhatta, 2018). Case study research is important for the business marketing research field and is considered an accepted design for the exploration of complex issues (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Harrison et al., 2017). This design helped me explore an organization's business practice based on participants' in-depth perspectives (see Harwati, 2019). With the case study design, researchers share participant interpretation of events, which often also affords a connection needed to generate required research data (Bartlett & Twycross, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017). The rapport created through active listening is important for the researcher in the exploration and discovery process and to ensure that participants share the same understanding of the topic (Mirrick & Wladkowski, 2019). My personal experience in the customer service department of a telecom firm facilitated rapport with participants and contributed to an easier understanding of subject-related data.

The other qualitative research designs were not suitable for the requirements of the explorative and interpretative objective of this study. A phenomenological design was not adequate because it is solely limited to the collection of data from interviews and consists of a description of an experience; a narrative of a phenomenon as it is lived

(Manen, 2017a). Using a phenomenological design means the researcher combines raw data collected from the description of the subject participant without attributing any meaning (Manen, 2017b). Additionally, in an ethnographic study, the focus is on the exploration of the beliefs, relationships, and behaviors of culture-sharing groups (Harwati, 2019). Researchers observe people's behavior by engaging with participants in the environment they live in (Smith & Jones, 2017). The grounded theory study design was also not suitable to the study objective, as the aim is not to confirm or to discover an underlying theory with the data collected from a natural setting (Sing & Estefan, 2018). With a grounded theory design, researchers tend to generate descriptive theory (Charmaz, 2017), which was not suitable to fulfill the objective of this study.

In addition to selecting the appropriate design, the process of data validation is contingent on achieving data saturation. Researchers reach data saturation when new information becomes redundant (Saunders et al., 2017). With a case study design, the researcher can achieve data saturation through a rigorous selection of subject matter experts who provide in-depth responses during the interview process (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). To mitigate bias in the interpretation of data collected from qualitative research, researchers use triangulation to validate findings by cross-checking different sources (Abdalla et al., 2018, Honorene, 2017). The use of triangulation to improve data accuracy and effectiveness as well as to confirm research findings is a widely accepted technique (Fusch et al., 2018; Varpio et al., 2017).

Population and Sampling

Purposeful sampling was suitable to choose participants for this type of study. In a qualitative research study, researchers generally use purposeful sampling to find and collect information relevant to the issue under study (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In purposeful sampling, the selected participants are usually subject matter experts who have the required knowledge on the subject and who can provide valuable in-depth knowledge about the topic (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Yin, 2018). Participants selected through purposeful sampling provide information relevant to the research study and may contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Ames et al., 2019). Participants for this study were selected based on purposive or judgmental sampling from predetermined study inclusion criteria. Selected participants provided valuable information not readily accessible from other sources that could contribute to a better understanding of the topic under study.

In the case study, researchers experience difficulties when determining adequate sample size. The research objective should be the researcher's baseline to determine the suitable sample size that can help achieve data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The researcher's main objective when collecting data is to achieve data saturation which would mean that no further information is needed (Mason, 2017; Saunders et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). A sample size of eight to 16 is often convenient to reach data saturation, though a greater number might not provide further information (Hennink et al., 2017). A limited sample size of six participants could be adequate to reach data saturation (Yin, 2018). The sample, drawn purposively from the population for this

research study, consisted of three decision-makers of the major telecommunication firms in Western Senegal. The main objective of this study was to gain insight into the strategies that the selected managers use to successfully retain customers and acquire new clients to increase market share. The rationale behind the limited sample was to spend more time with each participant and thereby gain an in-depth understanding of the topic (Farrugia, 2019). If further information was still needed, I would have called on more qualified participants through snowball sampling and other means to achieve data saturation (Naderifar et al., 2017).

Another consideration was the COVID-19 pandemic, which required that strict protocols be followed; consequently, remote interviews were conducted. Researchers should interview in a comfortable place for participants (Padgett, 2017). To avoid distractions, a professional environment is best suited to conduct interviews (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Two of the participants suggested and accepted to conduct the interviews after business hours to avoid distraction, and the third participant proposed to schedule the interview on a Saturday. All three interviews went well without disruption.

Ethical Research

The study participants were requested to set a mutually convenient time and date for the interviews that were conducted remotely using a web-based application such as Skype, Zoom, or similar communication technology. Participants were also asked that interviews be conducted in the office, when possible, to minimize the risk of distractions from family members. There was no risk associated with the interviews conducted in the

office, which is equipped with the necessary protection to safeguard the area. There were some minor discomforts resulting from fatigue and long working hours.

All required protocols were completed before engaging in the study data collection process. The Walden University Institutional Review Board approval of the proposal was the first step before starting the data collection. Once the proposal was approved and before conducting an interview, participants were reminded of the purpose and objectives of the study (see Dooly et al., 2017). Each participant was further provided with an informed consent form for review and their record. Before the meeting, a presentation document was emailed to give participants an overview of what to expect and to help prepare and ask clarifying questions if needed. Through the consent form, participants were also briefed about the objectives and the advantages of the research study as well as the risks and benefits (Agunloye, 2019; Dooly et al., 2017). The participant replied to my email with “I consent” to represent their voluntary agreement to participate in the proposed study (see Dooly et al., 2017). In the consent form, it was specified that interviewees would not receive any incentives for assisting in this study and that participation was voluntary with the option to withdraw anytime. Participants were additionally not required to respond to a question if they found or perceived it as inappropriate.

Study participants were also assured that de-identification of personal identity, including of affiliated institutions, would be followed. De-identification consisted of removing any detail that could link participants to any information. Participants did not provide any information that could jeopardize an existing personal position. De-identified

data puts the researcher in a position to better exploit the data without stress or fear of participants' data breach or loss (Gross & Miller, 2019).

After conducting interviews and gathering information, records and transcripts were kept in a locked safe only accessible to me. To protect the rights of privacy and protect confidentiality of participants, I keep the information in a secured storage requiring access code for a period of 5 years. After the 5 years, all paper files will be shredded and incinerated, while all electronic data will be deleted.

Data Collection Instruments

In a qualitative study, the researcher is often considered the initial data collection instrument (Clark & Veale, 2018; Wa-Mbaleka, 2020; Yin, 2018). Data collection instruments encompass interview guides, interview transcripts, tape recordings, and observations (see Renz et al., 2018). As the initial data collection instrument personally, collecting data about the research study entailed conducting semistructured interviews with the identified leaders of the telecommunication industries. Barrett and Twycross (2018) opined that interviews are considered the most explicit and candid method of collecting informant-rich data about a subject. Using semistructured interviews, the researcher creates a casual environment to make participants feel comfortable and express their personality freely (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Further to the interviews, observations and review of applicable organization documents collected from institutional websites were also undertaken. Archival and other organization internal documents are used as basic data collection instruments (Yin, 2018). Different approaches were applied to increase data reliability and validity of the

data collection process and consisted of member-checking to include transcripts and final data analysis interpretation reviews, review of internal documents and marketing materials used during promotional campaigns posted on company websites, and notes taken during interviews.

Collecting data from different sources and archival records may reinforce construct credibility through data triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The combination of interviews and document review constitutes a standard of practice in case study research and data triangulation (Yin, 2018). The main objective of triangulation is to have a better understanding of the data collected, which facilitates researchers' better-informed decision making and enhances data validation and reliability (Noble & Heale, 2019). The company standard operating procedures and other archived documents requested from interviewees have served as a baseline to compare with the responses provided by participants during the interviews. Company standard operating procedures encompass key performance indicators and guidelines regarding company expectations from employees in the performance of customer service. These procedures are an effective tool to increase the performance of the personnel (Md Isa et al., 2020). To improve the reliability of the findings of this study, the use of data triangulation involved comparing primary data against company archival documents available online and other secondary data from credible sources.

To focus on the main purpose of the study, I adopted a post-positivist research approach (Yin, 2018) which is deemed to consist of methodological pluralism (May et al., 2017). The researcher uses a post-positivist approach as a strategy to establish a clear

case study protocol with careful consideration of validity, and potential bias and to ensure that all elements of the phenomenon are being measured and adequately described (Yin, 2018). A case study protocol (see Appendix) was prepared with reference to the case study protocol guideline proposed by Baškarada (2014). The use of a case study protocol is a process that helps guarantee the truthfulness of findings by providing a ground rule to follow during data collection and data analysis exercises (Yin, 2018).

After the collection and transcription of data, the first step in the study protocol was to familiarize myself with the data. The process of familiarization consists of repeated readings of the transcripts (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Next to that, a thematic analysis to isolate themes using a process of constant comparison was conducted. The main purpose of thematic analysis is to identify meaningful repetitive information in the qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To ensure quality, different approaches were used including member checking, transcript review, interpretative review with the study participant, and finally triangulation of the study results against other credible sources of secondary data specific to the region and industry.

To further improve the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, transcript review and member checking were performed. First, a transcript review involved participants in the process of study validation. Researchers enhance the credibility and validity of study findings by requesting participants to review and comment on their interview transcripts (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Transcripts contents can be confirmed by interviewees to support and validate the plausibility and truthfulness of the information (see Varpio et al., 2017). Interview transcripts were submitted to

participants for review to corroborate or make necessary adjustments where needed to ensure that we had the same viewpoint about the transcript.

Member checking consists of another validation technique, an interpretive summary review that is often used to provide participants with the possibility to review the exactitude of the description of the phenomenon (see Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking was undertaken after the interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted. Participants in this study received the final interpretation of the transcripts and were given enough time to review and make necessary changes to reflect thoughts and to provide any clarification. Researchers use member checking to gain approval from participants (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Based on the information provided by participants and other documents relevant to the research topic in the proposed study, transcript review, data analysis, and interpretation review were appropriately used.

Data Collection Technique

The objective of the data collection technique was to implement strategies to seek and obtain in-depth data pertinent to the overarching research question, which entailed data and analysis of the strategies that Western Senegal telecom leaders use to retain and acquire new customers. Research data was collected from interviews and secondary sources such as industry trends, telecommunication organizations, and government websites. For a case study, researchers use different forms of documents such as e-mails, memoranda, administrative documents, letters, written reports, and industry reports (Buriro et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). Participants to this study were marketing managers of major telecommunication companies in Western Senegal who have proven experience in

successfully managing customer service departments. Participants were asked to voluntarily share e-mail messages, reports, administrative documents, and memoranda in direct relation to the subject of study and relevant information that could contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon. A researcher's main objective in the data collection exercise is to have information that is relevant to the research topic (Sy et al., 2020).

Semistructured interviews were conducted to explore and describe the strategies used by leaders of the telecom industry to retain and acquire new customers. Researchers use semistructured interviews to control discussions and keep the focus on the topic of study while granting participants the possibility to freely express their mind (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). To approach the identified participants, I used the social media LinkedIn and found the profiles of leaders of the Senegalese telecom industry. I sent emails to five identified participants with the script of the study informational contained in the letter, which was in the body of each email, and the informed consent form were included as attachments. The interview process was then planned with the first three managers who responded to the requests by email and expressed their consent to participate. A fourth participant expressed consent to participate, but he was in the middle of a promotional campaign and suggested postponing the interview; I thanked him but did not continue with him. Email is considered an efficient tool to contact and collect data (Fritz & Vandermause, 2017), but it does not generate a 100% response rate (Taherdoost, 2016).

Three decision-makers from the major telecommunication firms were expected to participate in the interviews. Because of the current pandemic situation, the Walden Institutional Review Board has mandated that remote interviews be undertaken; consequently, interviews were conducted using WhatsApp. Different platforms are available in modern advanced technology such as telephone, videoconference, email, and text messages, to remotely conduct interviews and collect data (Schober, 2018). Considering that people have their preferences or comfort of use, I have used the application that worked best for each participant.

From a researcher's perspective, different advantages can be identified in conducting remote interviews. The advantages of telephone or internet application-based interviews are that difficult topics are to discuss; interviews are less time-consuming and they can make some participants more comfortable (see Buriro et al., 2017). When participants have a busy schedule, it could also be easier to organize distance interviews (Fritz & Vandermause, 2017). The disadvantages of remote interviews could be computer malfunctioning, such as slow network connection, cybersecurity breach, call drops, or poor sound quality; all could lead to disconnection and even loss of confidentiality or data (Fritz & Vandermause, 2017). Some participants might not be familiar with the use of such technologies, which can affect their ability to troubleshoot minor glitches that could occur during the interview (Schober, 2018).

To conduct the interviews, working around participant schedules entailed choosing the best time possible for the interviews. Once a mutually acceptable date and time agreement were reached, the interview requirements such as test of recording

equipment was conducted before the start of each interviews. I activated the automatic audio recorder of my personnel laptop to save the conversation on the computer hard drive, but also on an external hard drive dedicated to this research study as a backup. I also used the Olympus (Pearlcorder J300) microcassette recorder to record and save the interviews.

For confidentiality protection, the location of the interview is very important (Oltmann, 2016). A suitable interview environment is important to address the privacy aspect with possible closed doors (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Two of the participants suggested conducting the interviews after office hours and one proposed to interview on a Saturday, which reduced the risk of intrusion. Because the interviews were conducted remotely, accessibility was not an issue. The current world health situation of the pandemic has imposed many restrictions in terms of physical interaction. Social distancing, mask-wearing, and companies' internal procedures are all limiting factors for researchers, and necessitate that interviews be conducted remotely.

The informed consent form previously emailed to participants was reminded before to starting the interviews. A good approach to creating rapport with participants is for a researcher to introduce myself and to remind them of the research topic, the expected length of the interview, and the number of questions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). It might be important to set a friendly working, yet professional environment, that can bring participants to open up easily to share experiences. Research participants could have a preconception of research in general. Researchers are expected to show appreciation of participant contributions and willingness to participate in a study

(DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Researchers are also expected to quickly build rapport through active listening and respect (Spradley, 2016). My background in the customer service department of a telecom firm facilitated rapport building with participants.

As stated in the informed consent form, every participant was reminded about the reason for recording the interview, which was followed by a request for permission to record. Answers were saved on my personal password-protected laptop with a backup on an external hard drive and a microcassette recorder PearlCorder J300. Specific words were noted in a booklet for further clarification during follow-up questions. As participants responded, a need for follow-up questions for better understanding and for clarification arose. With follow-up questions, researchers could get in-depth information that was preserved by participants (see Buriro et al., 2017). Before the interviews, participants were requested to provide pertinent organizational archives and other subject-related documents if possible. In this study, and upon request, participants provided me with institutional websites with pertinent data that I later visited.

To conclude the interviews, participants were informed that the interview data analysis report would be emailed to them for review and correction where applicable. To conduct member checking, I performed a transcription of responses to the questionnaire, conducted data analysis, and submitted copies of the summary report to participants for validation and correctness. Member checking supports the validation of information collected but further contributes to improving truthfulness by allowing participants to corroborate or amend the content of a transcript (see Birt et al., 2016). Along with the

transcripts, thank you messages were sent to participants. Gratitude contributes to positive psychological, physical, and social interaction (see Floyd et al., 2018).

Data Organization Technique

Different factors need to be considered in the data organization technique segment of the study; participants' privacy, confidentiality, and rights need to be preserved (Grech, 2018). For accuracy and reliability, data were collected from a variety of sources to conduct this research. Data collected included digital audio recorded during interviews, transcripts from audio recordings, notes taken during interviews, and information from institutions' websites. For appropriate use of the information, the large amount of data collected required good organization (Yin, 2018).

To safeguard the information, a data log was created and maintained on my personal password-protected laptop. As a backup archive system, copies were made on an external hard drive to keep in a safe as well as in cloud storage. To protect the information, data could be preserved in sealed office equipment (Oltmann, 2016). The data log contained original copies of all study materials (recordings, interview transcripts, coded data files, analytical files, and documents collected from institutional websites). To organize the data, labeled entry with the following classification criteria was inserted for each participant: (a) source of the data, (b) data identification, (c) file name, (d) and date of data collection. Computer software Excel Spreadsheet and the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 were used to organize and exploit data. NVivo 12 was user-friendly and very interactive. I had trouble using it at first, but with the tutorial and training videos emailed to me by the NVivo team, I was able to use the software with ease. The

qualitative data analysis software NVivo is a good data organization tool that researchers can use to find dominant themes, sub-dominant themes, and threads; NVivo is compatible with a variety of data types (see Dollah et al., 2017).

To prevent or minimize privacy risks to participants, a process of de-identification was instituted before the analysis process and consisted of removing personal information components that could lead to the identification of a participant. Identification numbers were assigned to reference interviewees in the data and analysis files. In accordance with Walden University doctoral study procedures, raw data will be maintained in a safe for 5 years. After 5 years from the completion date of the study, all paper documents will be shredded, and electronic copies will be deleted.

Data Analysis

The main purpose of data analysis is to scan through the interview answers to find relevant themes and codes that respond to the central research question (Yin, 2018). The major themes of this study, such as offer, promotion, satisfaction, *etc.*, were searched in the interview transcripts. To have thoroughly analyzed data, a researcher needs to produce a meticulous transcript that accurately reflects responses to the semistructured interviews. Identified themes and categories in the interview transcripts were organized to understand the variety of information provided by the different participants and personally sourced. Researchers often conduct qualitative data analysis by describing the relationship between categories and themes of data collected. Qualitative data analysis usually involves sorting and organizing data into themes and codes (see Nowell et al., 2017). The main research topic consisting of analyzing the strategies that telecom leaders

in Western Senegal use to retain existing customers and acquire new clients was the basis for efficient identification and sorting of themes. The more a researcher understands the research topic the better the themes are recognized, facilitating an increased convergence of data findings (Yin, 2018). In the process of analysis of the phenomenon under study, a researcher needs to always recall the research question to remember the “why” of the research (Yin, 2018).

With the understanding that the purpose of the analysis is to find themes that fall under the umbrella of the central research question, an alignment of the analyzed data with the customer retention management conceptual framework was performed. For the qualitative researcher, the conceptual framework serves as a bridge between literature review and study findings (Borrego et al., 2014). Because data collected was mainly text-based from interview transcripts, an important aspect of the data analysis was the coding process. The first step of the data analysis for this qualitative case study was coding. Coding combines two methods that consist of inductive and deductive or open coding (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). An inductive category formed from the raw material is very effective for qualitative content analysis. Inductive coding includes the identification of concepts and themes that emerge during the review of collected data; it is used in research studies that do not have pre-conceived theories, which seek to explain the topic under study (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

The deductive or open coding was primarily used to identify codes for a better understanding of data collected from interviews and other archival documents. The identified codes expectedly facilitated the segregation of keywords and themes in line

with the conceptual framework and the research sub-questions of the study. Collingridge et al. (2019) used open coding to identify themes and relevant concepts. Word-for-word transcription was conducted as suggested by Barrett and Twycross (2018) who posited that researchers need to finalize the word-for-word transcription before they can start data analysis.

The following key themes were searched in the review of the literature, in the selected conceptual framework, and the analysis of interview transcripts: *Service quality, listening to customers, satisfaction, loyalty, consumer expectation, retention, and response strategies*. Because themes derived from document review and interview data, using open coding served to apply the theory of data triangulation. Researchers collect information from different sources to enforce the validity and the interpretation of the data collected (Fusch et al., 2018).

The logical and sequential process for the data analysis was based on O'Connor and Gibson's (2003) five-step process, notably in: (a) organizing the data, (b) finding and organizing ideas and concepts, (c) building over-arching themes in the data, (d) ensuring reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the findings, (e) seeking possible and plausible explanations of the findings.

Step 1: Organizing the Data

Data was organized so that answers to the research question could be quickly found, files were labeled using a coding system unique to each participant and data source. For satisfactory data organization, Yin (2018) suggested that a researcher refers to the interview guide. In this study, data grouping mainly included interview transcripts,

notes of observations, and published and non-published documents. The efficient organization and management of data collected ensured a better understanding and application of the lens of the underlying theory, which represents the conceptual framework of this research study.

Step 2: Finding and Organizing Ideas and Concepts

The interview guide was accepted as a valuable resource to organize data collected during the interview. The collection and organization of empirical data are fundamental in the process of the qualitative research study (see Espejo et al., 2017). To find and organize data, the iterative process of continuously going back to the original research question was practiced. The iterative process allows the researcher to find congruence between responses and the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

At this stage, coding for ideas and concepts that emerged from the framework was performed. The process of coding consists for the research to continuously navigate between the raw data and the meaning made from the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Coding constitutes a tool for the researcher to give meaning to the data in a descriptive or interpretive manner (Clark & Veale, 2018). NVivo serves as an appropriate tool in the process of manually generating codes and themes (see Dollah et al., 2017). NVivo software and Excel were used to perform the sorting and analysis of data collected from interviews and other subject-matter documents, but primarily because NVivo has features that offer the possibility to transcribe directly from audio files.

Step 3: Building Over-arching Themes in the Data

At this stage, scanning for words or phrases frequently used by all participants in a particular question was performed throughout the different files and data. Researchers frequently use codes to define conceptual over-arching categories found both within and across different data sources, but that mainly provide meaningful responses to research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Once participant answers the research question and provide insights and perspectives, the thematic analysis was used to classify emerging themes and ideas. A code is of importance for the analysis when it is recurrent throughout the data (Hennink et al., 2017).

NVivo was used to organize data because of the different features. NVivo offers the possibility to transcribe directly from audio, analyze, code data sources, and capture ideas. Researchers across different disciplines have used NVivo to go through the analysis. Dr. Badur (2018) has used NVivo to strengthen qualitative research into improving education for Indonesia's 50 million-plus students. NVivo is used to facilitate the identification of themes from a variety of data sources, and can also improve rigor and transparency in the triangulation process (see Dalkin, et al., 2021). Other software in the market are Dedoose, ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA or QDAMiner, but none offers the efficiency of NVivo.

Step 4: Ensuring Reliability and Validity in the Data Analysis and in the Findings

To ensure reliability and validity, each of the response categories provided by participants had one or more associated themes that could provide a deeper meaning to the data. Different categories could be collapsed under one main overarching theme.

Researchers achieve accuracy and trustworthiness by establishing data reliability and validity (Cypress, 2017). The credibility of data is paramount to the use of research findings for business practice (Candela, 2019).

Step 5: Finding Possible and Plausible Explanations of the Findings

The process of interpretation includes the researcher's understanding of a topic and the data analysis (Yin, 2018). Data were organized in a sequential manner to evaluate each interview answer; a file dedicated to each interviewee was created and data was stored in the order they were collected. An indexed (alphabetical) sequential file system was used to quickly access information when needed. Manual and cognitive interpretation was performed; the most important tool for a researcher is his mind (Yin, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

Researchers have explored the reliability and validity of qualitative data to establish the truthfulness of research findings (Mohajan, 2017). The use of a structured questionnaire in the qualitative study has been a way for researchers to collect primary data from relevant sources (Chumba et al., 2019). Truthfulness is the cornerstone of data findings; researchers should have a mechanism to assess the validity and reliability of collected information. Member checking and triangulation are considered valid assessment tools (Yin, 2018). Reliability and validity should be the basis of any qualitative research and be considered in all phases of a study (Cypress, 2017). Data collected from a variety of sources could contribute to improving the validity and reliability of research findings (Mohajan, 2017).

Reliability

Reliability, replicability, and consistency can be associated; findings are said to be reliable if the same study was to be performed a second time and the results remained constant (Yin, 2018). To ensure dependability, member checking with each participant was conducted as well as triangulation through cross-checking different data sources. In the proposed study, following Marshall and Rossman's (2016) guideline entailed a sequential process of conducting interviews, transcribing, interpreting data collected and sharing the interpretation of the data collected with participants for confirmation. Member checking contributes to confirming research findings (Cypress, 2017).

To further ensure reliability and accuracy, different data sources were cross-referenced and analyzed, representing the triangulation of data in the proposed study. Triangulation is the fact of incorporating and corroborating data from different sources (Alami et al., 2019). Researchers use triangulation to increase data reliability and accuracy (see Ghazi et al., 2018). Among the different forms of triangulation, methodological triangulation from a comprehensive list of sources was used in this study. The main sources that were used to conduct methodological triangulation consisted of semistructured interviews, archival data from companies' websites, industry trends, reports from public websites, and notes taken during interviews. The diversity of data sources is a method for the researcher to increase the validity and reliability of findings (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation is associated with accuracy; data collected from various sources is more reliable than information from one single data source (see Varpio et al., 2017).

Validity

Validity and reliability are good indicators of quality for research, but there is no common agreement on how to determine validity in qualitative studies (see Hayashi et al., 2019). Researchers can establish the validity of data findings by addressing the credibility aspect of the research. The qualitative research study is said to be of quality when the conditions of credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and reflexivity are all met (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). To ensure credibility, member checking and triangulation throughout the data collection process represented a way of confirming the information collected. Credibility reflects the researcher's analysis method but also the relevance of the data collected (Thomas, 2017). The study findings need to be credible for a study conclusions to benefit organizations (Candela, 2019). The process was also invoked in offering them an opportunity to review the final interpretation of the data after the analysis through member checking. (Madill & Sullivan, 2018) posited that to ensure credibility, participants are asked to review and validate the researcher's transcript of the information collected.

To further ensure credibility, triangulation was adopted to verify the consistency of findings from the different sources used to gather data. Triangulation is considered a necessary tool to increase credibility and truthfulness (see Varpio et al., 2017). Data collected from interviews and confirmed with member checking notes taken, and other relevant documents and industry annual reports were all used during the triangulation process to confirm data accuracy and increase credibility. The diversity of data sources is

an indicator of trustworthiness and credibility for qualitative research (see Abdalla et al., 2018).

Transferability is another important aspect of research as it often contributes to the current body of knowledge. Transferability is the degree to which a research finding can be replicated in a different setting and still be applicable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Semistructured interviews that allow participants to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon under study were the main data collection technique for this study. A detailed explanation of the steps taken in this research study and the different contexts were annotated to allow readers and future researchers to apply the techniques in similar settings or circumstances. To provide meaningful substance to readers and future researchers, transferability should involve much more than participants' description of the phenomenon under study to include the context of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Methodological triangulation was also used to address and enhance confirmability. Triangulation is used to corroborate diverse sources and contributes to determining data trustworthiness and confirmability (Abdalla et al., 2018). To address confirmability, I reviewed the different recorded interviews as well as notes taken and confirm information collected through member checking. Member checking is a strategy for a researcher to avoid interpretation and to report information as described by participants while minimizing reporting bias (see Abedini et al., 2018).

Data saturation is reached when all participants tend to provide similar responses to a given question (Tran et al., 2017). Researchers could ensure data saturation by

following the same strict interview protocol with all participants (Fusch et al., 2017). To ensure data saturation, I verified that no new information emerges after undertaking comprehensive interviews. Reference to the interview protocol helped ensure consistency; additionally, data from credible industry sources served the objective of triangulation and presented findings pursuant to holistic analysis.

Transition and Summary

The intent of this single case study was to explore the strategies that telecom leaders in Western Senegal use to retain existing customers and acquire new clients. In section 1, a narrative of the background of the problem is presented to describe the foundation of the topic, with the description of the problem statement and purpose statement, as further detail to the research topic. A brief rationalization of the suitability of the method and research design was covered in the nature of the study section to provide the reader with an understanding of the research rationale and strategy. The interview questions are further listed and framed, to aid in the identification of the specific areas of the topic that participants responded to, as the goal was to elicit detailed participant insights in understanding the topic and phenomenon. The conceptual framework served to ground the study and as a lens to the research, while the operational definitions helped to contextualize and clarify specific words that were discussed. Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were developed to denote the boundaries of the study. The significance of the study was analyzed to explain the importance of the research and its benefit to the industry. A thorough review of professional and academic

literature was also conducted in section 1 to provide a synthesis of past research findings on the same topic.

In section 2, the details included a summary of the purpose statement, followed by an analysis of the role of the researcher and the participants selection process. The research methods and research design, population, and sampling are analyzed to ensure that collected data would contribute to answering the research question. To adhere to the standard of conduct as a researcher, the process entailed the development of the different topics of ethical research and a listing of the data collection instruments. A thorough description of the techniques used to collect data (data collection techniques) and the techniques to organize data (data organization techniques) that were further analyzed (data analysis) for reliability and validity was performed, to finally concluded with a transition and summary.

In section 3, the details provided included a discussion on this qualitative single case study outcomes to analyze the influence of such findings in the existing literature and the way findings can be applied to the telecommunication industry, as well as the implications for positive social change. The recommendations for action were provided by stating who specifically could benefit from the findings, but also recommendations for future researchers who could address the limitations identified in this study. A reflection on personal experience within the DBA Doctoral Study process was presented before offering a strong conclusion statement as a take-away message for the reader.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure a sustained increase in market share. Semistructured interviews were virtually conducted using WhatsApp with three marketing managers of the three major telephone companies who have implemented successful strategies to retain customers and increase market share. The collected data resulted in the identification of three overarching themes. The three managers' insistence on the importance of promotions to enhance customer satisfaction and retention confirmed the relevance of the customer retention management theory initially postulated by Dawkins and Reichheld (1990) as a suitable lens to serve as the conceptual framework for this study.

In Section 3, I present the findings and the potential applications for professional practice. The different implications for social change and recommendations for action are further discussed. A list of recommendations for further studies that derived from the analysis of findings are also provided in order of importance. I further share a reflection on my experience during this DBA study journey, personal biases or preconceived ideas, values, and the way this journey affected or re-shaped my vision of business practice. A final statement for future researchers and business leaders interested in this research concludes this research.

Presentation of the Findings

The main source of data collection consisted of interviews of three marketing managers from the major telecom firms in Western Senegal and public records from the following institutional websites: (a) The telecommunications and postal regulatory authority (www.artp.sn) as the telecommunications and postal regulator with a role of surveillance and regulation of the telecommunication industry sector, (b) the national agency for statistics and demography (www.ansd.sn) that is responsible for ensuring the technical coordination of the activities of the national statistical system. Information garnered from the websites was relevant to the research study.

Each of the three senior-level marketing managers participated in a virtual semistructured interview to respond to the overarching research question: What strategies do mobile telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers and acquire new clients. Confidentiality of participants was maintained using codes AXP1, AXP2, and AXP3 to identify participants during the process of transcription. Data saturation was reached when information was becoming redundant after I performed triangulation to validate findings by cross-referencing different data sources (see DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). The interview guide was of great support in the process of finding ideas and concepts. Using VoiceTyper dictation software I performed a transcription of the interviews and further used NVivo 12 to run word frequency query to generate word clouds that reflect the most used words by all participants (see Figure 1). I identified three major themes pertinent to the central research question and the conceptual framework: (a) importance of data, (b) adaptive

2017). Social media platforms are also used by company leaders and customers to communicate and interact (Guha et al., 2018).

Table 2

Importance of Data

Participant responses	Dominant emergent themes	Interpretation and analysis
<p>AXP1: We administer the same questionnaire to every phone user to obtain the NPS of each company. For example, in the questionnaire we ask the number of SIM cards a customer has, from which company, what specific service they use (data, voice,...), how much money spend per Month.</p> <p>AXP1: The collected data will allow us to make an informed decisions and to know the best strategy to meet customer expectations and satisfaction. Face to face interaction being the best way to get customer voice, the information is collected by the customer experience team during field surveys. The information collected contribute to the implementation of a successful promotional campaign.</p>	<p>Data collection</p> <p>Data interpretation</p>	<p>From the dominant themes, data collection constitutes the foundation on which promotional campaign activities are built; it is paramount to the success of a campaign. Data collected from customers is processed and translated into valuable information used by marketing leaders to make strategic marketing decisions.</p>
<p>AXP2: We have a dedicated team that collects customer feedbacks, we also do community management through social networks and a hotline that is outsourced for the time being; the information collected allow us to improve customer experience.</p>	<p>Data Collection</p>	
<p>AXP3: We have a team of competitive intelligence; they monitor all the signals about the strategies of the competition. We have data mining tools of advanced statistics that allow us to see the potential of each customer. This information is processed by data analysts who model the information and give us the future potential of each customer. Based on this information we can know the type of product we can offer to the customer.</p>	<p>Market intelligence</p> <p>Data analysis</p>	

Note. NPS = net promoter score

Theme 1 was in line with the customer retention management theory as the conceptual framework for this study, as information collected through the CRM team or customer experience team may provide hints to service providers for product improvement. To be effective and stay competitive, marketing department managers must constantly monitor blogs and social media to collect customers' impressions and needs (Dalziel & Klerk, 2020). Organization leaders are increasingly aware of the importance of social media and the contribution faster customer engagement and timely collaboration between a company and its customers (Kalani et al., 2018). Social media platforms are considered effective tools to improve companies' strategies to retain existing customers and to acquire new clients (Barros et al., 2017). Although social media platforms are considered valuable tools to collect customer data, all three managers agreed on the fact that field survey provides salient information they need to take action and establish a solid strategy. A field survey is the best strategy to know true customer expectations.

Figure 2

Word Cloud Density of Importance of Data



Theme 2: Adaptive Marketing as Customer Retention Technique

An adaptive marketing strategy supports a company in a changing market environment by tailoring products and services to meet customer expectations (Guo et al., 2018). In the context of adaptive marketing, organization leaders go beyond reacting to customer needs to spot customers unexpressed or implicit needs to propose unknown desired products and services. The tailored product offering is performed using behavioral advertising (Varnali, 2019), which is based on the monitoring and analysis of customer online activities (Mpinganjira & Maduku, 2019). Fast customer feedback is also important for a company to provide the customer with a timely and suitable response. The theme of adaptive marketing (see Figure 3) as customer retention technique appeared from Interviews Questions 1,2, and 3 and helped to answer to the central research question of this study (see Table 3).

Table 3*Adaptive Marketing as Customer Retention Technique*

Participant responses	Dominant emergent themes	Interpretation and analysis
AXP1: The CRM team identifies four major segments, and also uses some predictive analytical tools to target potential churning customers to implement action-reaction strategies to retain them by following specific scenarios to propose tailored offerings.	Retention technique	Respondents acknowledged the importance of adaptive marketing to quickly meet customer expectations and achieve customer retention. Organization leaders go beyond reacting to customer demands to spot customers unexpressed or implicit needs to propose customer's unknown desired products and services
AXP1: After collecting information about customer profiles, we create a personalized offer to meet the expectations of the customer.	Adaptive offering	
AXP2: Using differentiation strategy techniques, the company can focus on a specific segment of the market to create a personalized offer to meet customer expectations.	Personalized offer	
AXP3: We elaborate a specific marketing strategy for a given customer. If the customer is used to buying 1000 CFA (local currency) of airtime for, we can offer advantages that lead them to purchase 1500 CFA worth of airtime recharge. For example we offer them to spend 1500 CFA to participate in a drawing with a chance of winning a prize or some advantage, etc. The idea is to stimulate the customer to spend more than usual.	Stimulate customer consumption	

Note. CRM = customer relationship management

Based on participant responses, to achieve customer satisfaction, marketing leaders generally use market segmentation to offer tailored products and services (Bruwer et al., 2017). CRM entails personalizing service offerings to increase customer loyalty (Mohanty & Das, 2017; Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). For example, AXP1 suggested that “The CRM team conducts a daily management of customer base by monitoring specific segments of the market as well as customer behavior.” To establish retention strategies, telecom leaders can research historic data and information about the primary reasons that have resulted in customer churn and strive to improve the quality-of-service offerings (Ascarza, 2017). AXP1 explained that “The CRM team runs some predictive analytical tools to target potential churning customers to implement action-reaction strategies to retain them by following specific scenarios to propose tailored offerings.”

The theme of adaptive marketing as a customer retention technique is consistent with Dawkins and Reichheld’s (1990) customer retention management theory. The three managers acknowledged adaptive marketing as a technique to quickly meet customer satisfaction and reach customer retention. As described in the literature review, customer retention is the foundation of sustainable competitive advantage and profitability, a strategy used by firm leaders to protect market share from the competition (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). Firm leaders use customer retention techniques to avoid a decrease in market share consequence of customer churn (Ascarza et al., 2018). With the development of new technologies, digital and social media have become the new tools to run promotional campaigns, offering options to deliver quicker and personalized

Table 4*Promotional Campaign Strategies to Increase Market Share*

Participant responses	Dominant emergent themes	Interpretation and analysis
<p>AXP1: The success of the campaigns will mainly depend on customer experience and the loyalty program the company is using to retain them. If the customer perceives a “wow” effect during the test and the experience is memorable, then it will have a positive impact and they become promoters of the product, which helps the company increase the NPS.</p>	Positive experience	Leaders consider a promotion campaign as a must, a positive customer experience as an outcome of a promotion campaign may positively contribute to customer acquisition and retention and may lead to an increase in market share.
<p>AXP1: There is a correlation between the NPS, the CES, and the company revenue. NPS and CES are closely tied to the Key Performance Indicator set by the company as a measure of achievement. When the KPI grows, the revenue will grow accordingly which reflects an increase in the market share.</p>	effect of customer satisfaction on market share	
<p>AXP2: promotion in the Senegalese telecom industry is a must; company leaders who do not run promotions will fail... We inform customers by sponsoring a television or radio show, but we mainly utilize SMS which is the best tool to reach customers.</p>	Importance of Promotion campaign	
<p>AXP3: We continuously try to surprise the customer, to provide things that they did not expect, and to offer unforgettable experiences that produce a wow effect. It is the way we can build customer loyalty and win the heart of the customer. To meet customer satisfaction, we initiate loyalty programs to surprise customers and offer them a memorable experience.</p>	Positive experience	
<p>APX3: To increase our market share, we are obligated to run retort campaigns to offer customers the opportunity to compare with competitors... Promotional campaigns allow us to identify customer expectations and identify the right time and place. These are non-stop campaigns.</p>	Promotion as a competition tool	

Note. NPS = net promoter score, CES = customer effort score, and KPI = key performance indicator.

The notion of net promoter score is important to marketing department leaders as it is considered a significant indicator of customer loyalty and company growth prospect (Kristensen & Eskildsen, 2014). The CES on the other hand is an estimation of the level of efforts that a customer deploys to access a company product or to find a solution to a problem. As discussed in the literature review, CES is defined by company responsiveness, which is the company's eagerness to address customers' requests and to provide fast service (Setiawan & Sayuti, 2017). Responsiveness is among the main dimensions of service quality that can lead to customer satisfaction and to customer loyalty (Demir, 2017, 2019). APX3 stated:

We have high-value customers who like to have quality, they are customers who do not need promotions, they expect specific support and they want to be assisted so that they do not have to worry about service disruption. The satisfaction of our high profile customers is quality related.

Promotional strategy is considered central to the understanding of the dynamic of customer acquisition and retention (Yahya et al., 2019). To run a successful campaign, firm leaders should be consistent with the nature of the message delivered and should convey the same information across the different mediums (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2017). The theme of promotional campaign strategies to increase market share is coherent with the conceptual framework of customer retention management. The longer a customer stays with the company, the more they buy company products and may bring in new customers through positive word-of-mouth (Ang & Butler, 2005). In community markets such as the Senegalese telecom industry, word-of-mouth information is a

significant promotion tool to acquire new customers (Dadzie et al., 2017). Word-of-mouth plays an important role in new customers' decision to choose a service provider (Yaman, 2018). All three marketing leaders agreed on the existence of different other reasons to run promotion campaigns.

Awareness Campaign

Companies launch awareness campaigns to inform customers of new products or when new features are added to existing products. All three company leaders use pull/push marketing strategies to an extent, but the implementation of a push marketing strategy requires some significant logistics investment that only larger companies can afford; but it is accepted as an effective marketing strategy to raise awareness and motivate purchase intentions (Makrides et al., 2019). Participants AXP1 and AXP2 mainly use pull marketing strategies by offering important discounts such as buy one get one free on SIM cards or incremental discounts on airtime purchases that can go from one hundred to five hundred percent. AXP3 referred to retort campaign as a strategy to raise awareness, as a strategy of retention and increase of market share.

Promotion Through Distributors

Distributors are the link between firms and final users, they play an important role in the management of the process of distribution to the end-user. All three participants highlighted the role of distributors in their respective promotion campaigns. As illustrated by AXP1:

We inform our distributors two days before the promotion, it allows them to stock up on airtime cards before the promotion day, that way they do not run out of

airtime the day of the promotion. Our distributors and the competition play a great part in our decision to run a promotion campaign.

AXP2 added that “to get the distributors to put our products forward, we offer them incremental incentives; the more they sell the more they make.” When Firm leaders share company values and trust with distributors, the company-distributors relationship could become stronger and could benefit both parties (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Financial Environment

All three managers also mentioned the financial environment as a trigger factor for promotional campaigns. When the money transfer service environment is changing with lower transfer rates, or when a new money transfer service provider enters the market with low offers, people tend to make extensive money transfers. Since money transfers are performed over data; money transfers are opportunities for phone service providers to run a promotion campaign; consequently, customers will buy airtime (data) to use for the transactions. This statement does not hold true for all service providers; phone companies that offer money transfer options do not require their customers to use data to conduct a transfer transaction, customer use a dial code instead.

Religious and Social Gathering

Senegal is known for large religious events (Magal, Gamou, Popenguine ...); those are pilgrimage moments that last days and gather millions of people in a city. Telecom service providers deploy large equipment to satisfy communication needs but also run extensive retention and acquisition campaigns. The events are opportunities for companies to boost sales and promote products.

For regular promotions, all three participants agreed that to make a greater impact, it is better to run promotion campaigns during the first 10 days of the Month; this is because people are paid on a monthly basis. Smaller companies do not want to be confrontational with larger firms, they try to avoid days that the larger companies run promotion campaigns. To avoid being confrontational, smaller company leaders have a dedicated team to monitor larger companies' frequency of promotion.

All three participants propounded the pertinence of promotion campaigns and associated loyalty programs to customer retention and loyalty. The different loyalty programs such as incremental bonuses and other discounts are meant to build a strong relationship with customers and to increase customer loyalty. Company leaders who can implement successful loyalty programs to improve customer retention may benefit from a long-lasting commitment (Srivastava & Rai, 2018). Loyal customers become promoters of company products by spreading positive word-of-mouth, which may bring in new customers that generates an increase of firm market share. Loyal customers are satisfied customers who tend to repeat purchase of company products (Islam et al., 2020). This statement ties in with the customer retention management conceptual framework and the literature review performed in section 1 of this research study.

The importance of promotion campaigns and the protection of consumers led the government to put in place an agency regulator called Agency for the Regulation of Telecommunications and Posts. Every month, telecommunication firms are required to submit a monthly promotion plan that outlines the days and forms of promotion they intend to run. Consequently, companies do not have a choice of changing option or

strategies to ameliorate customer retention. Participants also, upon request, provided corporate and government websites that I visited to have a visual of promotion materials and other relevant documents such as quarterly and annual reports. The outcome of this research study may provide pertinent information to marketing leaders of the telecommunication industry to contrive successful strategies for customer acquisition and retention. The study findings may aid telecommunication managers with the knowledge to improve service quality in the continuous quest to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Participants of this study emphasized the importance of customer satisfaction and loyalty that may result in positive word-of-mouth and an increase of market share. Loyal customers play an important role in the process of firm strategy design and products promotions. The findings of this study are in line with the customer retention management theory conceptual framework postulated by Dawkins and Reichheld (1990) who contended that a surge in customer retention rate directly translates into an increase in customer value. Company leaders might consider customer retention as a direct result of customer satisfaction and a possible outcome of an increase in sponsorship (Okonkwo et al., 2020).

Theme 1 of the data analysis indicated the importance of customer data in the execution of business strategies. Participants concurred on the use of surveys, focus group, and social media platforms to collect customer responses. Feedback collected in the form of data is treated and translated into valuable information that telecom leaders utilize to make strategic decisions. Loyal customers are often eager to provide valuable

feedbacks that may be used by service providers to offer tailored products (Bijmolt et al., 2018). The application of findings to business practice may be the understanding of the necessity for marketing department managers to constantly monitor blogs and social media to collect customers impressions and needs (Dalziel & Klerk, 2020).

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis highlighted the significance of adaptive marketing as customer retention technique from an attempt to deliver personalized products. Data collected (theme 1) provide insights that leaders use to elaborate adaptive marketing techniques. The application of findings to business practice may consist for leaders to have a better understanding of customer information and how customer feedback can be used to improve or personalize products to achieve customer satisfaction and retention. Leaders may recognize the importance of open communication between the company and its clients through social media and the way the interaction may enhance company overall appreciation and increase of firm revenue (Arnaboldi et al., 2017).

The data analysis performed during this research study revealed a trilogy of: (a) collect of information (Theme 1), (b) elaboration of personalized responses in form of new or improved products (Theme 2), and (c) promotion to inform and raise awareness (Theme 3). The goal of this research study was to contribute to the strategies of customer acquisition and retention. From the study findings, leaders of the telecommunication industry may find practical the different strategies garnered in the course of this research to either develop new strategies or apply these strategies to increase customer retention and improve business performance.

Implications for Social Change

This research study consisted of analyzing the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers, acquire new clients and ensure sustained business performance. Findings of this research may provide avenues for telecom leaders to establish successful customer retention strategies that may increase firm revenues and assure long term business sustainability. From the findings of this study, the contributions to positive social change may include an increase in company market share and revenues. The ensuing gains and prosperity may manifest in increased contributions to the local community consisting of tax fees to pay to the local authorities; money that could be used to improve public infrastructures. The study results and knowledge may also contribute to the community welfare, especially in tandem with a laudable corporate social responsibility policy, while such efforts assuredly will have a positive effect on social change and community prosperity.

The unemployment rate in Senegal was exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic to a record high of 23.4% compared to 16.7% the previous year (National agency for Statistics and Demography, 2020). The study contribution for social change could be that an increase of company revenues translates into job security for the employees but also employment opportunity for more people. In Senegal, telecom firms have a variety of sub-contractors who may benefit from an increase of promotion activities: (a) Printing houses that produce flyers, billboards, and other promotion materials used in the course of promotional campaigns will experience an increase of activity that will lead them to hire more people, (b) distributors of air time may benefit from an increase in telecom firm

activities, (c) call centers and outside telecom consulting firms might all experience an increase of activities due to higher demand from growing company activities. The ramifications of the study of customer retention and acquisition go beyond firm sustainability to include employee satisfaction, community development, and its constituents.

Recommendations for Action

The study findings may be valuable to telecom marketing managers who may use the results to initiate successful customer acquisition and retention strategies. With sustainability in mind, business leaders' overall strategy is aimed at maintaining a steady increase of revenues collected from a loyal customer base. The goal of organization leaders is to make a profit from a systematically well-organized and coordinated series of activities (Desrocher, 2010). To realize such an objective, managers need to achieve customer satisfaction and retention since loyal customers constitute the company's revenue generators. Consequently, my first recommendation would be for marketing leaders to empower the CRM team. The CRM team should be considered not merely as a data-driven service center, but an entity able to elaborate conclusive strategies that go beyond data collected for a blunt needs analysis to become a unit that builds a fostered trust-based relationship with customers. The CRM could incorporate the sales team to build and nurture a strong relationship with customers, which would alleviate the Customer Effort Score (CES) with the positive consequence of improving the customer net promoter score.

All participants mentioned the notion of KPI as a tool to measure the success of promotional campaigns. Although commendable, a KPI is only focused on the measure of predetermined quantitative objectives; and could miss pertinent information that might be used to improve a company's strategy. To fill the gap, my second recommendation would be for leaders to consider adopting the CRM balanced scorecard (CRM BSC). The notion of a CRM scorecard will entail focusing the scorecard on the core functions and processes of CRM, namely: promotion and marketing, sales, and customer service. By doing so, leaders could establish a control system that will provide performance measures but also reveal shortcomings. To obtain the required involvement and efficacy from the personnel, my third recommendation would be to train the CRM team to level up to the new CRM BSC design requirement and expectations through continuous improvement.

My last recommendation would be for leaders to consider training the independent distributors to embrace the culture of the company. Promoters are already companies' partners, leaders could promote loyalty initiatives through distributors. When Firm leaders share company values and trust with distributors, the company-distributors relationship could become stronger and could benefit both parties (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Recommendations for Further Research

The analysis of the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers and acquire new clients provided compelling insights and directions. The Senegalese telecommunications market is very dynamic; mergers and acquisitions as well as the arrival of new investors are regularly observed. Based on the ARTP 2019 annual report in its June 2020 edition, there were three major

players in the mobile telecommunication industry in Senegal: (a) Sonatel S.A. with a market share of 53.55%, (b) Saga Africa Holdings Limited with a market share of 26.43%, and (c) Espresso Senegal with a market share of 20.02%. Following a call for applications and to promote the development of the electronic communications sector, the Senegalese authorities have granted access licenses to three companies to invest in the mobile virtual network. In 2020, there were 351 suppliers registered with the ARTP and the sector is constantly evolving. The market for mobile virtual networks that provides value-added services (NVS) is an area of interest and could be a good area of study for further research.

From the study outcomes, the recommendations for actions were provided that could inspire leaders to improve current strategies. The results also indicated the need for further research that could include a review of the limitations of the study, or an exploration of possible aspects of value creation not addressed in this research, such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the telecommunications sector. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, travel has been restricted due to lockdown policies around the world; consequently, people relied on digital communications for work, entertainment, or simply to communicate with relatives. The contribution of the telecommunications industry to Senegalese economic growth is considerable; the turnover of the sector increased by 4.46%, investments increased by 71%, and job creation increased by 22.8% from the previous year (ARTP, 2020). Increased investment in equipment is an opportunity for telecom companies to improve the quality of service offered by faster and more reliable networks, which in turn may create a more demanding type of customer

who knows how to seize the opportunity offered by strong competition. The future is bright for service providers, the post-covid-19 pandemic has reshaped the way businesses are run; telecommunications will likely be at the center of the change in the future. Companies that can provide reliable service and a flawless security system will expectedly be the winners. The study of the level of security provided by the service provider could be an interesting topic for future researchers.

This study was limited to Western Senegal which represents only 23% of the Senegalese population and 0.28% of the national territory (ARTP, 2020). Further study could be conducted in other regions of Senegal that would cover a longer time, a broader geographic area, and include a larger population sample. The profile of participants was a limited to the possibility of accessing valuable information available to personnel who did not fit the profile of the target population; further research could address the limitation consisting of the profile of interviewed managers. Personnel with proven experience who are not in a leadership position may detain information that could be used to improve customer retention and acquisition strategies.

The COVID-19 pandemic health situation that required that strict protocols be followed, and remote interviews are conducted limited the opportunity for improved communication and to garner visual cues provided by face-to-face interviews. Further research that consists of the face-to-face interviews could address the limitations of remote interviews and could allow the researcher to collect exhaustive information (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). Participants in a face-to-face interview tend to provide more information than telephone interview respondents (Ervin, 2011).

Time and resources were limiting factors to this research study; therefore, quantitative research design could be conducted in future research that might disclose a variety of successful customer acquisition and retention strategies. With a quantitative research design, the researcher could provoke new perspectives by evaluating different hypotheses and comparing the relationship between variables to confirm or refute existing theories.

Reflections

My enrollment in the Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program has brought out qualities that I had never suspected to have. I am not patient by nature but I like to study regardless of the time it takes to learn. One might wonder how can someone not be patient and like to study at the same time, knowing that studies require patience? Well, I get bored easily, I do not steadiness and learning consists of acquiring new skills. I did not have a good grasp of the requirement of the DBA; I had a preconceived idea that it was going to be another learning experience that would lead to a higher degree: I was wrong. The requirement of time, discipline, dedication, and organization to name a few, was just overwhelmingly hard to balance with family and professional obligations. With the support of my spouse, my chair, and my peers I managed to reach deep within myself to find the resources needed to continue. A support system is a must for someone who embarks on a doctorate journey; it should not be engaged alone.

The DBA program is challenging, yet very rewarding in all aspects. DBA residences that took me to Barcelona in Spain and Istanbul in Turkey were opportunities

to meet peers from different continents. I have met some great people and built a fraternal relationship with a brother from Dublin in Ireland, and we have plans together. Spending time during residencies with people from all walks of life and continents with whom I shared the same fears and challenges helped me develop resilience and determination, just like in the military.

An impressive aspect was the commitment of the experts I interviewed during the data collection process. All were very enthusiastic about participating in the research study and were grateful to be associated with the research. As the saying goes, “he who teaches learns,” two respondents suggested that the interviews sparked ideas for the sake of their business strategies. Collecting and analyzing data that seemed very intimidating at first had become a pleasant and instrumental process as it provided me with tools and techniques that I am currently using in my profession as an auditor.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore the strategies that telecommunication marketing managers in Western Senegal use to retain customers, acquire new clients, and ensure a sustained increase in market share. A qualitative research method with a single case study design was found to be the most appropriate approach to conduct this study and thereafter to conduct the analysis of the information collected under the aegis of the research question.

The research findings were consistent with the widely held literature as well as the conceptual framework of the study and could contribute to customer retention strategies. This study’s findings can be used by telecom industry leaders to develop better

customer retention strategies that are considered the result of customer satisfaction but also the main generator of profits for businesses. Business leaders already understand the importance of customer retention and the correlation with business sustainability; however, it is equally important to understand that customer retention strategy should be treated as a living instrument dependent on changing internal and external environments. We acquire knowledge through reading and listening: When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know, but when you listen, you may learn something new- Dalai Lama.

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Appendix: Case Study Protocol

1. Introduce myself to the participant(s).
2. Turn on the audio recording device.
3. Follow the procedure to introduce participant(s) with a pseudonym and coded identification; note the date and time.
4. Begin interview with question number 1; follow through the final question.
5. Follow up with additional questions and collect company documents (if any).
6. End interview sequence; discuss member checking with the participant(s).
7. Thank the participant(s) for taking part in the study.
8. Reiterate contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants.