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Strategies Broadcast Television Producers Use to Retain Subscribers

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Lincoln Memorial University, 2016

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Diminished network subscriber retention can have devastating consequences on the financial sustainability and profitability of television production companies. When the problem of reduced subscriber retention occurs, television producers become concerned about financial losses and operational sustainability. Grounded in Thaler and Sunstein's nudge theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies television producers use to increase subscriber retention. The participants were five senior television producers from three production companies in the southeastern region of the United States, who possessed relevant experience and knowledge on how to retain subscribers. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, archived records, company documents, and public information. Using thematic analysis, three themes emerged: authentic storytelling, knowing your audience, and teamwork. A key recommendation is for production leaders to develop projects that promote transparent stories and satisfy viewer preferences. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change that include the potential for production leaders to offer improved television programming that enhances the lives of subscribers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the dreamers of dreams, to those who believe in the possibility of a better world, and to those who have sacrificed, and continue to sacrifice, to make that belief come true.

Acknowledgments

In hoping to thank everyone, I would first like to thank the mysterious force that made life, as we know it, possible. Without life, there is no one to thank or acknowledge. After that, I would like to thank those who tried to make my life better; my parents, Miroslav and Ljubina Ivkovic, my sister, Martina Ivkovic, my fiancée, Alonna Howland-Lewis, and our sweet puppy, Reese, and the rest of my family—those still with us, and those no longer here.

Moreover, I would also like to thank my friends, the ones who stuck by me through the years, and the ones who helped raise me up when I was down. My best friend, Antonio Brkovic, and his family were instrumental to my scholarly success. Equally, I would like to thank the many professors that tried to show me the right way, specifically, Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Dr. Warren Lesser and Dr. David Vázquez. I met you at a time in my life when I was stuck, and you helped liberate me.

In addition, I would like to thank the artists, inventors, and scientists of the world. You have given me hope to keep learning, sharing, and searching for the truth. Finally, I would like to thank the students of the world, as well as those who participated in this study. You are very much part of that mysterious force that makes life worthwhile, and I wish you all the best as you continue to live it.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Traditional broadcast television is on the verge of extinction, and many of the producers responsible with limiting the damage are lacking the necessary strategies to do so. At this time, the most pressing issue concerns the effects of digital streaming on the traditional broadcast television market, specifically those formed from the introduction of Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, and HBO Max, among others (Jose, 2021).

Since early 2021, these streaming providers are responsible for more than 60% of consumers leaving cable providers nationwide in the United States, and by 2024, it is estimated that a further 35% of U.S. households will cut their cable subscriptions (Jose, 2021). During this period, streaming services are expected to amass over $200 billion in revenue, a figure that may diminish the influence of broadcast television altogether (Jose, 2021).

To circumvent these financial swells, broadcast television producers must develop strategies to remain competitive in a highly contested market. By failing to do so, a variety of other issues, such as the loss of productivity and the risk of bankruptcy, may arise. These dramatic shifts are occurring in other industries, and they could occur in the television industry as well.

In this study, I aimed to bridge the gap between the ongoing streaming revolution and the existence of broadcast television by helping broadcast producers identify strategic shortcomings and offer potential solutions to overcome them. My focus revolved around television producers in eastern Tennessee, a growing hub of television production in the eastern United States, because of the area's far-reaching market influence and community presence.

Background of the Problem

From a consumer perspective, the traditional television ecosystem is growing at a rapid pace. From a business perspective, the ecosystem is changing faster than most can keep up with. Consumers welcome these evolving changes because of enhanced affordability, reliability, and convenience. However, from a business perspective, traditional broadcasters regard the new broadcast ecosystem as disruptive because of loss of advertising revenues and jobs, and for some broadcasters, cessation of the business enterprise (Snyman & Gilliard, 2019).

For instance, when Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu entered the television market, their new and distinct identities were disruptive because they were created during the height of the digital age when consumers had computers. The same is not applicable to more traditional broadcast producers because a significant number of their consumers are antiquated (Wayne, 2018). In addition, in contrast to streaming providers, traditional television broadcast producers rely on older technology and older methods of payment. Albeit streaming providers offer versatility in both price and service, broadcast television producers offer low-cost products and reach wider audiences and more remote geographic areas than their digital counterparts (Geiger & Lampinen, 2014).

Problem Statement

With the rise of streaming services, broadcast television producers are experiencing the loss of traditional television subscribers (Sherman, 2020). In 2019, more than 60% of Americans ages 18 to 29 relied on digital streaming as their primary source of televised content (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019). The general business problem is that some broadcast television producers are losing subscribers because of the increase of digital streaming services. The specific business problem is that some broadcast television producers lack strategies to retain subscribers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers. The target population consisted of five senior television producers from three production companies located in the east Tennessee region of the United States who have developed successful strategies to retain subscribers. This study could contribute to social change by improving the strategies television producers use to retain subscribers and maximize community presence. Moreover, contributions to social change could lead to the creation of improved television programming that both informs and educates consumers in a positive manner.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research is defined as a method of scientific exploration that focuses on structured and unstructured data collection techniques to discover underlying patterns behind a phenomenon (Barnham, 2015). I chose the qualitative method for my study because I wanted to interview participants to explore proven strategies that retain television subscribers. The quantitative methodology is defined as a method of scientific exploration that focuses on statistical tools to collect and analyze data (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative research relies on an impersonal voice to probe for answers (Park & Park, 2016). I did not select the quantitative method for my study because, as Park and Park (2018) noted, researchers use a quantitative method to gather hard statistical data over personal specific experiences. Mixed methodology is defined as a research method that contains two or more separate research strands that merge to form a new method (Schoonenboom, 2018). Although the utilization of this method may increase the amount of data gathered, I did not choose mixed methodology for my study because it is costly and the associated time constraints may have delayed completion of the study.

The case study design enables researchers to explore insights of a phenomenon and provide deeper understanding (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I chose a multiple case study design. Multiple case studies are appropriate forms of inquiry when researchers want to explore a specific phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use a phenomenological study design when seeking to understand the structure and meaning of human experiences (Sanders, 1982). I did not choose a phenomenological design because I was not focusing on the structure and meaning of human experience. Instead, I used the case study design, so I could explore and gain a deep understanding of the successful strategies some television broadcasters use to retain subscribers and sustain their businesses.

An ethnographic research design is defined as a type of design where researchers observe, and sometimes interact with, their study's subjects (Baskerville & Myers, 2015). I did not choose an ethnographic research design because the findings from my study could be difficult to replicate and because the design could require considerable time. Because I intended to interview a limited number of participants in a limited amount of time, the multiple case study design was the most appropriate for my study. The multiple case study design refers to case study research in which several cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case can provide (Mills et al., 2010).

Research Question

What strategies do broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to retain subscribers?
2. What barriers did you encounter in implementing strategies to retain subscribers?
3. How did you address the barriers to implementing strategies that effectively retain subscribers?
4. What strategies were most effective to retain subscribers?
5. What strategies were least effective to retain subscribers?
6. What were the main customer issues that caused subscribers to not be retained?
7. How did you measure the effectiveness of the strategies to retain subscribers?
8. What were the key factors you took into consideration for creating strategies to retain subscribers?
9. How can traditional television syndication strategies be applied to retain subscribers?
10. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies that you used to retain subscribers?

Conceptual Framework

The nudge theory was first introduced in 2008 by American economists Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein as an attempt at influencing people's judgment, choice, and behavior in a predictable way by making use of people's boundaries, biases, routines, and habits as integral parts of such attempts (Hansen, 2016). The theory consists of positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions. Business leaders use these ideas to influence, or nudge, consumers to make choices regarding the purchase of certain products and services (Sunstein, 2015). *Nudges* refer to the deliberate changes to designs of people's choice environments—the ways in which options are presented or framed—in attempts to predictably steer those people in specific directions (Sunstein, 2015). This theory is appropriate for my study because it involves the nudging of consumers in choosing cable subscriptions over digital streaming services. Because television producers look to retain subscribers through positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions, this theory can be used to influence the type of content being created and marketed (Von Bergen et al., 2016).

Operational Definitions

Business model: A design for the successful operation of a business, identifying revenue sources, customer base, products, and details of financing (Schroeder, 2015).

Content distribution: The process of sharing, publishing, and promoting content (Feng et al., 2009)

Digital age: The present time in which many things are done by computer, and large amounts of information are available because of computer technology (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023)

Indirect suggestion: A type of suggestion that can influence the conscious mind through the unconscious state (Fourie, 1997).

Nudge theory: The idea of using encouragement or suggestions to change people's behavior while still giving them freedom to make their own decisions, rather than, for example, using laws, rules, or taxes (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Positive reinforcement: A technique that elicits and strengthens new behaviors by adding rewards and incentives instead of eliminating benefits (Catania, 2001).

Streaming provider: An online provider of entertainment that delivers content via an internet connection to a subscriber's computer, TV, or mobile device (PCMag, 2022).

Television ecosystem: Social and technologic media landscape related to the audiovisual and TV field (IGI Global, 2023).

Television producer: A person who oversees one or more aspects of video production on a television program (Media College, 2022).

Television subscriber: A person who subscribes to broadcast and cable television (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are unexamined beliefs insinuating that people think what they think before realizing it (Ku & Au, 2021). For this study, I selected participants with extensive knowledge in the television industry, and I assumed that their participation in my study was transparent and unbiased. Secondly, I assumed that my participants would answer all my research questions with long, detailed answers and would provide recommendations related to my problem statement.

Limitations

Limitations are the constraints that extend beyond the control of a researcher and which have the potential to impact the results of a study (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2017). In this specific study, there were two limitations. First, participants may have limited experience as television broadcast producers, which may limit the extent of data which are useful for the study. The second limitation was that participant responses may reflect a specific demographic as opposed to a broader population within the study area of the east Tennessee region of the United States.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to those characteristics that limit the scope and define the conceptional boundaries of research (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2017). In this specific study, the demographic of television producers revolves around those individuals located in eastern Tennessee. I delimited the scope of this study by this location and collected from individuals located in eastern Tennessee.

Significance of the Study

This study may have value to television production businesses and broadcasters interested in creating strategies that may retain subscribers resulting in increased profits. Moreover, this study may contribute to effective practices of business by improving how television producers and broadcasters create and distribute television content in the digital age, resulting in improved subscriber retention.

Because many Americans still watch broadcast television, this study might contribute to positive social change by demonstrating how broadcast television producers can develop more beneficial programs. Knowing how to create this value for viewers may improve the self-worth, self-dignity, and professionalism of television producers and broadcasters. Local communities may benefit from broadcast programming that is perceived as more informative and more applicable educational programs.

Contribution to Business Practice

The contribution of this study to business practice regards strategic change. After the conclusion of this study, broadcast television producers may find interest in utilizing the findings from the study to develop strategies that may curb the exodus of paying subscribers. This may lead to the creation of further community employment and support the creation of other business ventures within the geographic location to support local community organizations to grow and support the community member needs.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change in the television industry are reflective of the social transformations, socioeconomic orientations, and lifestyles of the societies involved (Karkartal, 2021). In the television industry, positive social change can promote job security and innovation. Specifically, positive social change implications may include television producers' potential to hire creative and passionate individuals keen on improving the creative and ethical standards of television. Further implications for positive social change may influence the creation of informative and educational television programs, boost the attraction and retention of television subscribers, improve social and economic fairness, and eliminate job turnover in local communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies television producers use to increase television subscriber retention. Customer retention is essential to the growth and sustainability of business (Moisescu & Gică, 2020). For this study, I used Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory, a decision-making concept derived from behavioral economics, as the conceptual framework lens to explain the strategies that business leaders use to increase television subscribers and retain television subscribers.

Researchers who conduct coherent literature reviews can form the basis for high-quality research and help maximize relevance, originality, generalizability, and impact (Maggio et al., 2016). In this literature review, I highlighted the perceptions of television producers concerning subscriber retention in the television industry. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) claimed that researchers conduct literature reviews to generate research questions that identify or construct gaps in the literature for specific topics. Moreover, scholars attest that literature reviews help shape critical elements of a particular study (Sandberg, 2011). This literature review consists of various theories that affect employee turnover, work policies, and leadership strategies that can reduce the television industry's subscriber turnover rate.

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature pertaining to the application of Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory for the retention of television subscriber is in short supply. However, in this literature review, I provide 10 themes connected to increasing television subscriber retention. The essential themes of this literature review are (a) the conceptual framework for the study, Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory; (b) alternate theories for the study, McClelland's (1985) human motivation theory and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory; (c) contrasting theories, Thaler and Sunstein's (2015) sludge theory, Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory, and Alderfer's (1972) ERG theory; (d) background of the television industry, (e) retention, (f) causes of turnover, (g) retention rates, (h) retention strategies, (i) leadership, and (j) consumer motivation satisfaction. Within the literature review, I initially focus on Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory as the primary conceptual framework and then focus on the alternate framework of McClelland's (1985) human motivation theory and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to both clarify and justify the strategies company leaders use to retain consumers. In that respect, the ability to fully understand the origins of turnover is crucial for leaders trying to address the precedents for turnover. To extrapolate these ideas, I also expanded upon additional topics, such as the television industry, consumer retention challenges, consumer satisfaction, consumer motivation, and turnover causes.

Search Strategy for Literature

To identify scholarly, peer-reviewed sources on the research topic, I conducted research within the following databases: African Business Source Complete, AISHE-J, American Economic Association, American Psychological Association, Arizona State University, BioMed Central, BMC Health Services Research, BMJ Journals, Business Source Complete, Cambridge Dictionary, Cambridge University Press, CNBC, EBSCO Discovery Service, EBSCO Host, EDIS Journal, Elsevier, EJBRM, Emerald Insight, ERIC, ERS Publications, Forbes, Fort Hays State University, FQS, Frontiers, Google Scholar, Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business School, HubSpot, IDEAS, IEOM Society, IJCAR, IJOC, Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness, Junior Scholastic, JSTOR, Kennesaw State University, MDPI, Media College, National Bureau of Economic Research, National Library of Medicine, Northwestern Scholars, Ovid, Oxford University Press, PLOS, PNAS, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, ResearchGate, SAGE Journals, ScholarWorks, ScienceDirect, Science Publishing Group, Scientific Research Publishing, Semantic Scholar, Springer Link, StatPearls, Taylor & Francis Online, Timor-Leste Journal of Business Management, The Florida State University, *The Qualitative Report*, *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, University of Michigan, USC Libraries, Walden University's Online Library, Wiley Online Library, and the William F. Ekstrom Library. In my searches, I used the following keywords: *business model, target population, positive reinforcement, indirect suggestions, consumer satisfaction, consumer commitment, subscriber retention, subscriber retention strategies, cost of subscriber turnover, subscriber recruitment, organizational culture, strategic leadership, performance management, leadership effectiveness, motivation theories, motivators, broadcast television, television challenges, disruptions in the TV industry, regulations in the TV industry, human resources,* *workplace conditions, workplace stress, profit, attrition, productivity, television production companies, television producers, cable subscriptions, digital streaming, streaming provider, Thaler and Sunstein's nudge theory, McClelland's human motivation theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Thaler and Sunstein's sludge theory, Locke's goal-setting theory, Alderfer's ERG theory, employee motivation,* and *social change.*

As noted earlier, I incorporated information from peer-reviewed and scholarly articles, reports, seminal works, government websites, public websites, and books, ultimately, deep diving for concepts and theories related to consumer retention within the television industry. For purposes of efficiency, I cited and referenced each source used in the literature review, as required for Walden University's DBA scholars. A minimum of 85% of the sources identified are peer-reviewed and current, with publication dates between 1959 and 2023. Table 1 outlines the academic and professional sources used in the study.

Table 1

Content of Literature Review

Sources	# Total	Pre-2019	2019–2023	% Total
Peer-reviewed articles	179	105	74	81%
Books	15	15	0	1%
Websites	16	4	12	1%
Walden resources	1	0	1	0%
Public databases	6	0	6	0%
Government databases	4	3	1	0%

Thaler and Sunstein's Nudge Theory

Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Mertens et al. (2022) determined that Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory was built on insights from behavioral economics and focused on the design of choice environments that facilitate personally and socially desirable decisions without restricting people in their freedom of choice. VonBergen et al. (2016) noted that nudges—subtle, covert, and often unobtrusive interventions—are designed to influence individual and societal behavior and, in turn, consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Sunstein (2015) suggested that with appropriate nudges, neither human agency nor consumer freedom is at risk. Actually, the opposite is true. An appropriate nudge has the ability not only to promote education, but also to help inspire action (Sunstein, 2015).

To that point, a nudge is a form of intervention, for it steers people in certain directions but also influences them to choose their own path (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). This allows the nudge to work for them rather than against them. A complementary nudge, therefore, becomes a reminder of sorts, because it warns people what their choices entail (York & Loeb, 2014). On this topic, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) claimed that not all interventions and reminders are nudges. To qualify for that title, nudges cannot be incentivized (Sunstein & Thaler, 2015). Incentivization limits the effectiveness of nudging. Despite everything, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) asserted that while some nudges work because they inform people, others work because they make choosing easy.

Theoretical Interface

The freedom to choose is the fabric that binds nudges to consumer and employee satisfaction (VonBergen et al., 2016). Fundamentally speaking, the nudge theory has a predilection for designing choices (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Proponents of the theory have the choice to identify, analyze, and reshape existing choices and influences that people are given by political entities, corporate entities, and media entities, among others (Thaler & Sunstein, 2015).

When the nudge theory first originated, the concept of *choice architecture* entered the scholarly conversation too. In the theory, this concept refers to the design of choices and the impact of choices on decision making (Arno & Thomas, 2016). For business leaders, that architecture consists of the number of choices presented, the manner in which those attributes are described, and the presence of a default option (Cronqvist & Thaler, 2004). For a nudge to form, all three need to merge, and for all three to merge, the creator needs to find their audience (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008)

Since 2008, nudges were typically reserved for businesses. In that time, business leaders have utilized nudges to both retain and satisfy their consumers and employees alike. In fact, the nudge theory became so popular in various business circles, that Thaler and Sunstein (2015) developed the sludge theory, an antithesis to the nudge theory and a type of theoretical approach that, unlike its primary counterpart, is filled with friction and bad intentions.

Motivational Factors

Scholars have outlined the correlation between employee and consumer satisfaction and employee and consumer retention, and neither involve the aforementioned friction and bad intentions. For example, Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003) insinuated that consumer satisfaction and consumer retention compound on a regular basis. However, with proper motivation, business leaders can increase retention and satisfaction alike (Henning-Thurau, 2016). Similarly, Ryan and Deci (2000) claimed that intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence satisfaction for employees and consumers. To substantiate their belief, Ryan and Deci developed the self-determination theory. In doing so, they quickly learned that people are motivated by different things. Some people are motivated because they value what is motivating them. Some others may be motivated by external coercion; they could either be bribed or influenced into action through financial means (Ryan & Deci, 2000). There are also those who are motivated by a sense of personal commitment or by the fear of failure. With respect to work and consumer culture, this type of motivation is generally reflective of societal pressures—to make money or to look cool, for instance. Chang (2020) speculated that most people view consumption as a means of improving their quality of life in the sense that they allow consumption to dictate how happy they can become. For business leaders, these ideas are helpful for retaining consumer loyalty and maintaining a long-standing and trusting relationship with them, too (Xiao et al., 2022). When business leaders showcase loyalty and trust to their consumers, their employees are likely to do the same and, as a result, become more motivated at work.

Keeping employees motivated, however, requires a certain degree of observation and understanding. To reach those states of leadership, business leaders must maintain a safe and happy working environment. Employees may become fearful and unhappy when they are forced to work in a sustained, stressful environment (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). Salas-Vallina et al. (2020) considered feelings as they relate to happiness at work. In their research, the authors observed 492 financial service employees and quickly discovered that happiness at work directly affects cross-selling performances. In particular, they noted that not only are engaged people healthier (and put more energy into their work), but they also are happier and, thus, inspired their colleagues to work better, which promotes networking and performance rather than stress and fear. Like Thaler and Sunstein (2008), Sallias-Valina et al. (2020) concluded that motivational factors are conducive to consumer and employee satisfaction. In that sense, this exposure of Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory is an extension of the assessment outlined in the conceptual framework section of this study. As a result, I further explore the supporting framework in relation to the consumer satisfaction interface.

McClelland's Human Motivation Theory

The supporting conceptual framework of this qualitative multiple case study was McClelland's (1985) human motivation theory. In my study, the structure of McClelland's human motivation theory is used to aid and enhance an understanding of the retention strategies business leaders employ in the television industry. I selected McClelland's (1985) human motivation theory to explain why the strategies used by television company leaders have proven successful in increasing television subscriber retention because McClelland (1985) grounded his theory in the emotional needs of human beings.

In retrospect, Sunstein (2015) asserted that when used correctly, nudges exemplify McClelland's human motivation theory, in that they help influence employee satisfaction and, by association, consumer satisfaction. Moreover, McClelland's theory contains the accepted and trusted components of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Pardee, 1990). Scholars have suggested that intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable whereas extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Technically, the components that comprise these motivations evolve when the need for power, affiliation, and achievement are activated (Rybnicek et al., 2017). In addition, the ability to attain pleasure, achieve social prestige, and avoid punishment also influence motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, sometimes, these theories are linked by personal relationships, academic achievement, and career success (Liu et al., 2022). For business leaders, this link may also extend to consumer satisfaction, a form of intrinsic motivation connected to extrinsic motivation.

Jones and Sasser (1995) identified that higher levels of consumer satisfaction lead to higher levels of consumer loyalty, which in turn lead to higher profits for business leaders. Evidently, consumer satisfaction and consumer dissatisfaction are critical for understanding the motivating factors for firms and their clients. Rybnicek et al. (2017) attempted to validate McClelland's theory by conducting a study with 44 participants using functional magnetic resonance imaging. The authors aimed to identify how participants completed tasks before receiving rewards such as high income, respectful leadership, or a prestigious company car (Rybnicek et al., 2017). Rybnicek et al. (2017) discovered that the more employees were engaged with their work, the better they performed and the more profits they helped generate. McClelland (1985) proffered that an employee's need for reward stimulates this type of behavior. Still, McClelland (1985) believed that different needs are applicable to different employees, and therefore, some needs could influence consumer satisfaction and some needs could create consumer dissatisfaction. Similarly, Jones and Sasser (1985) believed that consumer dissatisfaction results from employee dissatisfaction. After reviewing McClelland's (1985) theory, the specific features of an organization could lead to employee and consumer satisfaction, while other features could lead to employee and consumer dissatisfaction.

Theoretical Applicability

Rewards that apply to the need for power, affiliation, and achievement are the main motivators of McClelland's theory on human motivation (McClelland, 1985). Without these rewards, McClelland (1985) asserted that employees would become dissatisfied, and that their performances would diminish. McClelland (1985) claimed that when performances diminished, employees would get unmotivated.

Unmotivated employees may influence consumer dissatisfaction (Jones & Sasser, 1995). In addition, consumer dissatisfaction could also result from the disintegration of needs (Rybnecik et al., 2017). To some extent, McClelland (1985) attempted to explain how needs drive consumers to engage with specific brands. Typically, consumers engage in consumption behavior to create and maintain a sense of personal identity (Echezuria, 2012). Once that identity is constructed, consumers become more loyal to the base of their constructs (Echezuria, 2012). Loyal consumers, therefore, help motivate employees.

In most organizations, motivated employees reflect the health of the organization itself. McClelland (1985) claimed that robust companies have different means of motivating employees. While some business leaders outlined realistic targets to achieve certain goals, some leaders offered employees the opportunity for involvement in decision-making processes; while other leaders simply created environments where collaboration thrives. Despite the different approaches, motivation is positively correlated to satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, employees and consumers are motivated by their interactions with their environments (Skholer & Kimura, 2020).

Consumer Satisfaction Interface

Pardee (1990) speculated that the groundwork for truly comprehending consumer satisfaction stems from McClelland's human motivation theory. When this theory first emerged, McClelland (1985) explained that motivation was deeply connected to an individual's desires. Although McClelland emphasized three distinct motivating factors for such desires, McClelland (1985) further asserted that the desire of consumer satisfaction, for instance, mirrors a person's dominant motivating factor. For most people, the dominant motivating factor reflects their own life and cultural experiences (McClelland, 1985). For most consumers, they influence brand engagement.

To develop an engaging brand, organizational leaders should first understand the needs of their consumers. Baptista et al., 2021, claimed that McClelland's (1985) theory has proven useful in understanding the psychology of consumers. Most consumers are satisfied when their needs are met. However, since consumer needs differ, organizational leaders are expected to explore various motivational factors to reach them (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Generally, those factors concern brand engagement, and, by extension, brand loyalty.

Consumers must meet the following prerequisites for engaging with a specific brand: (a) perceived brand quality, (b) perceived brand value, (c) convenience, and (d) communication (Chang, 2020). All four prerequisites are required for total engagement.

Organizational leaders are themselves required to foster a culture of work that promotes these forms of engagement (Baptista et al., 2021). The inability to foster this type of work culture will not only dissatisfy employees, but also consumers (Chang, 2020). Organizational leaders can utilize scholarly theories to guide them in identify the motivating factors responsible for driving consumer satisfaction. McClelland (1985) had clearly demonstrated his theory can help to understand the initial motivation and subsequent satisfaction of those types of individuals.

Alternate Theories

Although Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory was the conceptual framework for this study, the addition of McClelland's (1985) motivation theory and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory may offer alternative approaches for understanding consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction is a cognitive or emotional response to an organization's product, service, or capability (Giese & Cote, 2000); and thus is a significant determinant in consumer turnover.

Consumer Satisfaction Theories

With his theory, McClelland (1985) and his peers outlined three types of needs consumers require in order to remain satisfied. The first need concerns power. The second need concerns affiliation. The final and third need concerns achievement. Bound together, these three needs illustrate how certain factors can influence consumer satisfaction.

Counter to McClelland's (1985) principles, the proponents of the nudge theory implemented mixed-method methodology in an attempt to explore consumer satisfaction

(Lin et al., 2017). During their research, Lin et al. (2017) created an alternative approach to nudges. In this approach, they designated nudges into a dual-system framework. The nudges in System 1 were heuristic-based, and consisted of intuitive, biased, associative, and automatic choice-making. The nudges in System 2, were rule-based, analytical, flexible, and, slow. Most consumers inhabit the first system (Lin et al., 2017).

Unlike McClelland's (1995) system of three needs, the dual system of nudges offers are less rigid, and more versatile. In the television industry, for example, the ability to weigh one's loyalty to broadcast against the ease of streaming can be critical for television producers focused on limiting competition (Jose, 2021).

Moreover, this type of nudging has proven even more effective when consumers believe that their desired brands are honest and genuine, and not deceiving (de Ridder et al., 2022). When brands are deceiving, consumers are less responsive to nudging, and when consumers are less responsive, they are more reluctant to make desirable choices (de Ridder et al., 2022).

With the inclusion of desirable choices, television producers are more ready to employ McClelland's (1985) human motivation theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to promote customer satisfaction. To apply these theories effectively, business leaders need to create products and services that their clients will engage with on a regular basis. In addition, business leaders need to remain transparent in how and what they create. Otherwise, both parties risk disconnecting from each other, and from the attempt to reach satisfaction (Chang, 2020).

Dissatisfied consumers are dangerous (Chang, 2020). On top of brand distancing, they may also publicly declare their opinions, indirectly nudging other consumers from refraining in the choice-making approach. It is critical for business leaders to understand their consumers' lives. Failing to do so, will result in marketing gaps, and the lack of satisfaction awareness (Kotler, 2019).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) determined that consumer behavior is guided by the potential of positive incentives (Solomon et al., 2017). Since human behavior consists of one's personality, experiences, and knowledge, purchasing decisions are reflective of the individual behind the purchaser (Liu et al., 2022). However, each purchasing decision involves different factors. In Vroom's theory, they are as follows: (a) expectancy, (b) instrumentality, (c) valence (Vroom, 1964). Chopra (2019) noted that easy use, competent levels of performance, and a rewarding, trustworthy experience are responsible for consumer satisfaction. Moreover, consumers are responsible for their actions. Vroom (1964) insinuated that consumers place value on their money and how their money was spent. For the creation and nurturing of fruitful business relationships, leaders are expected to satisfy these criteria (Vroom, 1964). Vroom (1964) referred to expectancy as the positive association between effort and performance and identifies the importance of a performance-reward relationship (Solomon et al., 2017).

Previously, Vroom explored consumer motivation, intrinsic satisfaction, and retention factors (Oliver, 1974). Vroom (1964) noted that business leaders established reward systems to achieve these needs. Fischer et al. (2019), recognized that, coupled with intrinsic satisfaction, these rewards could also be extrinsically motivated. These findings accentuate the importance of satisfying human needs (McClelland, 1985). Vroom (1964) claimed people will make choices based on their personal differences. However, unlike McClelland (1985) and Herzberg et al. (1959), Vroom (1964) claimed that choices are more desirable when the expectations behind them are limited. For example, Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu compete over a specific project, which only one of them acquires, leaving consumers with a limited option or with the fear of missing out. For this reason, the expectancy theory proves effective at predicting consumer motivation through the lens of business effort expenditure (Solomon et al., 2017).

To reinforce this idea, Sharot (2017) implied that the anticipation of rewards is the defining motivation trait for consumers. However, Chang (2020) found that the more that those consumers are experienced, the more they will become dissatisfied when they are not rewarded properly and frequently (Chang, 2020). As a consequence, expectancy theory has significant implications for consumer motivation, particularly, for motivation practices. Vroom's (1964) theory could provide an alternate approach for this study since the type of strategies that can drive television producers to increase consumer retention when specific conditions exist.

Contrasting Theories

I also found three contrasting theories, including: (a) Thaler and Sunstein's (2018) sludge theory, (b) Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory, and (c) Alderfer's (1972) ERG theory. All three theories contain an element of application that diverges from the three primary theories, and although their various insight presents an alternative approach to retention, they were not chosen because they were not applicable to the research problem.

Thaler and Sunstein's Sludge Theory

The primary contrasting theory of this study was Thaler and Sunstein's sludge theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2015). Established in 2018, the authors emphasized marginal obstacles, or sludges, that prevent people from making the right choices (Mills, 2023). In contrast to nudges, sludges are typically designed with a sense of malice, often forcing the sludged individual to abandon the concept of choice all-together (Thaler, 2018). For businesses, sludges are the administrative red tape needed to jump through certain hoops (Mills, 2023). For consumers, they can potentially hinder constitutional rights (Thaler, 2018). The use of sludges can help understand choice architecture, and the difference between having the volition to choose and the constraint to follow someone else.

Theoretical Applications. Sludges are ubiquitous where human beings shop (Petticrew et al., 2020). In business arenas, sludges are used to maximize profits at the expense of the buyer's welfare (Thaler, 2018). For instance, many subscription-based companies offer services that are needlessly complex. To subscribe, the service requires intimate personal data and legal permission checks. To cancel, however, the servicer performs various cancellation tricks, distributing various taxing fees. Sludges are clearly the opposite of nudges (Thaler, 2018).

Petticrew et al. (2020) determined that leaders who employed sludges in business practices forego corporate social responsibility. Instead, these individuals embrace unethical behavior that can be harmful and irresponsible. Although the use of sludges can be positive, they generally tend to advance particular agendas, such as fearmongering and propaganda (Thaler, 2018). Researchers claim that sludges are three-pronged, consisting of: people motivated by them, people opposed to them, and indecisive people (Thaler & Sunstein, 2015). Nonetheless, business leaders are expected to understand how different people respond to sludges.

The mission of television production is to engage, educate, and inspire. The use of sludges subverts these values for financial gain. Free trials and binge-watching can be considered subversive. Freebies require financial data, and overconsumption reduces sleep quality. Both scenarios are designed to increase business profits at the expense of the consumer. Business leaders should, therefore, heed the use of sludges. If not, they could lose consumers.

Theoretical Challenges. Business leaders utilizing sludges in business practice will experience a host of issues. One of the issues is the volume of choices that consumers have (Sunstein, 2017). Another issue is the rise of nudges, the contrast to sludges (Mills, 2023). When presented with both options, the consumer may become overwhelmed, and, in turn, avoid choice all together (Sunstein, 2017).

At that point, the consumer may begin to encounter certain challenges. The initial challenge may result from having to differentiate between nudges and sludges (Sunstein, 2017). The secondary and tertiary challenges may consist of the short-term effects and non-responsiveness of both (Sunstein, 2017). All three could make sludges ineffective and pose a flight risk to the consumer (Petticrew et al., 2020). Finally, some sludges are wholly inaccurate, and others may present a danger (Petticrew et al., 2020).

Despite these obvious challenges, the biggest challenge of sludges may stem from the friction caused by the sludging process itself (Mills, 2023). The sludging process may consist of red tape and monopolization, in addition to financial difficulties and hardship (Mills, 2023). Business leaders that wish to adapt the sludging process in their practices should consider solutions to prevent these issues from becoming disruptive (Sunstein, 2017). Disruption is counterproductive and can lead to inefficiency in the workplace (Sunstein, 2017).

Sunstein (2017) claimed that, in the face of sludging: (a) the business leader can choose to do nothing, (b) sludge in a different manner, and (c) fortify the sludging effects through incentives, mandates, or specific bans. Although the sludge theory can be impactful in certain contexts, it was not appropriate for this study because of the many potential risks and costs for both business leaders and consumers alike.

Locke's Goal-Setting Theory

Contrast to the sludge theory, Edwin Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory is far less risky for most business leaders. In essence, the goal-setting theory helps to highlight individuals that set and follow difficult goals better than those who set and follow easy goals. (Locke & Latham, 2002) To set these goals in an effective manner, Locke (1968) proposed five specific goal-setting principles for everyone involved: (a) clarity, (b) challenge, (c) commitment, (d) feedback, and (e) complexity (Locke & Latham, 2002).

In addition, this theory, which contains more than 40 years of empirical research, was developed around the notion that, conscious goals, and not subconscious ones, affect action (Locke & Latham, 2002). Locke and his co-researcher, Latham (2002), claimed that the primary function of the goal-setting theory is to predict, explain, and influence performance on organizational objectives. Moreover, Locke and Latham (2002) claimed that this occurs when the objectives are accepted, attainable, and precise.

Theoretical Applications. Locke and Latham (2002) claimed that goals affect performance through directive, energizing, persistent, and arousing functions. However, in order to reach certain goals, the goal-setter must first be clear-minded. Without clarity, the goal-setter cannot overcome potential challenges. The goal-setter must also display commitment. If he cannot, he will not be able to receive feedback. The lack of feedback creates complex situations that prevent goals from being reached (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022).

In the television industry, producers often encounter challenges of various complexities. To remain goal-oriented, producers must be willing to modify their behavior (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022). Because goals can be malleable, the primary tenet of the goal-setting theory revolves around behavior modification (Clements & Kamau, 2018). Although goals have different trait and are not best suited for every situation, business leaders establish goals to measure their operational efficiency (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022). Gkizani and Galanakis (2022) argued that the right goals can land in the wrong hands, and impair, rather than enhance, performance.

Theoretical Challenges. Most TV producers are concerned with goals and performance. While goal setting can improve performance by more than 15%, goal setting can also decrease productivity in the wrong target population (Locke & Latham, 2002). The TV industry relies on a defined target population. A defined target population will support specific goals (Locke & Latham, 2002).

In the TV industry, where disruption is commonplace, goal setting is critical. Television producers can only reach specific goals when they employ hard-working, knowledgeable people that understand their organizational mission and their respective audience. However, these performance meters are only achieved when goals such as safe working conditions, good compensation practices, and healthy work schedules are created first (Ekhsan, 2022). Nevertheless, this particular theory is not suitable to my study because it focuses less on motivation, and more on performance.

Alderfer's ERG Theory

The final contrasting theory for this specific study was Clayton Aderfer's (1969) ERG theory. The theory of existence, resistance, and growth was developed between 1961 and 1978, and refers to factors that contribute to individual human behavior (Caulton, 2012). The ERG theory reflects previous theories that have attempted to spotlight the nature of intrinsic motivation; the works of Abraham Maslow and David McClelland, for instance (Caulton, 2012).

The ERG theory is steeped in human desire. On top of attempting to address an individual's physical needs, the theory also attempts to address the needs of interpersonal relationship, and the needs of personal development in a professional setting (Barikani et al., 2012). Although the ERG theory borrows from Maslow's hierarch of needs theory, Alderfer forged his own theory.

In the mid-to-late 1970s, the theory was the subject of several studies that focused on supporting the theory's undertakings. Despite certain derivative data, the Caulton (2012) determined that the theory's need fulfillment was responsible for moderating satisfaction and importance. Caulton (2012) also noted that this phenomenon subsisted within the tenets of its existence, relatedness, and growth rather than between each element. For that purpose, the ERG theory offered various performative applications within the business world.

Theoretical Applications. Alderfer (1969) postulated that existence, relatedness, and growth are not progressive needs since each element is dependent on each other for achieving satisfaction. In the business world, for example, Alderfer (1969) claimed that despite poor workplace conditions (existence), employees could create a great workplace to work to achieve personal and professional growth. However, if employees are given limited growth opportunities, they may experience frustration and decreased motivation, thus, becoming dissatisfied (Alderfer, 1969).

Dissatisfaction is the anti-thesis of the Alderfer (1969) ERG theory. To avoid this dilemma, ERG proponents urged business leaders and followers to implement three related, motivation-based steps: (a) fulfill existence needs, (b) monitor unsatisfied relatedness needs, and (c) focus on growth. Choosing to take these steps could alter the course of an organization's future sustainability (Yang et .al, 2011).

The fulfillment of existence needs is the first step to future sustainability (Yang et al., 2011). During this step, the leader must enable and promote the safety, wellness, and security of their followers. In the TV world, safety, wellness, and security are imperative to business operations and success (Jain et .al, 2018). The neglect of these steps can have drastic effects for the entire enterprise, and leave leaders exposed to demotivation as a consequence (Caulton, 2012).

In response, the second step to future sustainability becomes rather clear (Yang et al., 2011). During this step, leaders are expected to foster work relationships that promote collaboration and project-sharing (Yang et al., 2011). For TV leaders, harmonious teams are the difference between progressive and stilted creative conditions. A disruption of harmony stilts creativity, and spreads viciously across other TV teams and departments, as well (Jain et al., 2018).

Finally, the last step to future sustainability reflects the first two steps, forming a deep field of the entire ERG universe. Caulton (2012) identified that despite the nature of the previous two needs, leaders must still offer growth opportunities to their employees, otherwise, they risk alienating an entire workforce. At this point in time, the TV industry is experiencing this conundrum in the form of the WGA writer’s strike, and the way forward involves challenging conversations (Li, 2023).

Theoretical Challenges. Contrary to the ERG’s premise, the actual realization of the associated steps can be grueling, especially for television producers looking to remain relevant in the changing TV landscape (Sherman, 2020). The competition within the TV market can often be fierce and require multi-faced strategies to combat the potential pitfalls involved (Moran, 2020).

Although Alderfer (1969) argued that it is possible to pursue the three ERG needs at the same time. In this case, television producers perform duties at the expense of budget lines (IBISWorld, 2023). When budget lines are limited, the ability to satisfy each need becomes limited too. As a result, the actual needs must then be reexamined, and the most crucial one must then be chosen (Caulton, 2012). At that point, unrest within the workplace could arise, which may damage the mission and values of the organization (Jose, 2021).

What is more, the favoritism between ERG needs could reverse engineer the pre-established harmony of project-based teams. An unsafe TV work environment can derail creative focus and replace it with high amounts of stress and anxiety (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). When stress and anxiety are elevated, the needs of relatedness and growth become ancillary, and, accordingly, dismiss the theory’s notion that the three needs combined are not dependent on each other (Caulton, 2012).

Now, more than ever, when the world has undergone various changes and shifts, television producers need to take action to progress forward; to incentivize their workforce and their clientele. TV producers must implement work conditions that are harmonious across all sectors (Ekhsan, 2022). At this time, the ERG theory is not appropriate for this study.

Television Industry

This section focuses on the television industry, including the history, statistical data, economic impacts, issues, and the necessity for highly skilled television producers. In the 2022-2023 season, there were over 122 million TV homes in the United States (Stoll, 2022). Out of those 122 million, roughly 65% paid for some version of broadcast television – the number of subscribers having plummeted by 10% in the last 5years

(Stoll, 2022). In 2023, experts valued the television industry at $44.3 billion and noted that market growth had declined from the previous year (IBISWorld, 2023). Despite heavy turnover rates, the television industry currently employs 24,087 producers (IBISWorld, 2023). The specific business problem is that some of these broadcast television producers lack strategies to retain subscribers. Therefore, a significant factor contributing to an organization's success stems from subscriber-retention strategies (Ekhsan et al., 2022).

Television production is a massive occupation, and the services provided by television producers are vital to the economy of the United States (Flynn, 2023). The television industry's primary purpose is to inform and educate through the broadcasting of specific programs (Geiger & Lampinen, 2014). Television producers often experience many obstacles while attempting to perform their duties and responsibilities (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019). Some of these are reflective of the television industry's nearly 100-year long struggle with television producer shortages and television subscriber shortages (Sherman, 2020). In her industry review, Zhang (2021) discovered that industry success is two-pronged, relying on both the satisfaction of producers and the satisfaction of subscribers, to emerge.

The television industry is part of the larger media and entertainment industry, and, at present, consists of various businesses. The focus of this study was several television production companies in the east Tennessee region of the United States. In this country, there are over 11,500 TV production companies conducting business (IBISWorld, 2022). Since 2018, the number of TV production companies has increased by 4.8% (IBISWorld, 2022). As of 2023, these companies employed over 80,000 people, with around 6.8 people being employed by each company on average (IBISWorld, 2023). Although the majority of employees are of Caucasian descent, the gap between ethnicities and genders has decreased in recent years (Stoll, 2022). In addition, the creation of new programming has increased too (Stoll, 2022). The effort of these companies and their respective employees are essential to the American economy.

The amount of spending in the American television market surpassed $100 billion last year on advertising alone (Stoll, 2022). By the end of 2023, it is estimated that market revenue will exceed $200 billion (Stoll, 2022). A crucial element behind these statistics stems from the fact that many television subscribers have flipped from broadcast to streaming. Last year, there were 72 million cable television subscribers – a loss of more than 25 million since 2016 alone. By 2026, that figure is expected to decrease in half (Stoll, 2022). As a matter of fact, that half will consist of 112.9 million Americans. These figures are significant for TV production companies because they influence the number of advertising dollars that are readily available for producers. Without this form of financing, television producers are expected to continue losing subscribers. At this time, nearly 60% of Americans are now subscribed to a streaming service, and only roughly 34% pay for cable TV (Stoll, 2022). Together, the two figures are radically altering the financial landscape of the TV industry for the foreseeable future.

At this time, the television industry provides television services throughout the entire United States (Jose, 2021). In this industry, television producers are the primary contact between the business and the subscriber (NCTA, 2023). The U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics (USBLS, 2023) indicated that, without television producers, the economy could falter and cause irreparable financial damage. Furthermore, high producer turnover rates could jeopardize the structure of the whole media conglomerate (USBLS, 2023). Since the loss of producers could, therefore, influence the loss of subscribers, Stoll (2023) contended that television businesses should develop business strategies that recruit and retain preeminent employees. Ineffective strategies prevent that from occurring and obstruct businesses from finding qualified employees (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The average cost of hiring an employee costs around $4,000. In the TV world, this cost varies between $3,000 and $5,000, depending on the size of the business and the expectations of the role (USBLS, 2023). The factors that ultimately determine the cost of hiring, and, by default, the recruitment and retention of new producers, often reflect the state of the television market itself (IBISWorld, 2023). The current market has grown every year since 2018, and the turnover rates have dwindled for streaming companies, in particular (IBISWorld, 2023). Although competition continues to evolve, IBISWorld (2023) predicts that the TV market will increase by 2.2% in 2023, revealing new and exciting opportunities, for all of those involved.

The technological advancements of television-centered devices and gadgets has made these opportunities possible (Lotz et al., 2022). Throughout history, television has existed in particular areas and on limited devices (Lotz et al., 2022). These days, TV is broad in content, and very fluid. In the future, the meaning of television could be reformed all together, and become part of an evolved medium (Tarshis, 2019).

In 1985, more than two-thirds of U.S. households had more than two TVs, and nearly one-fifth had three TVs (Tarshis, 2019). Today, Tarshis (2019) notes that those same households could have that many TVs, in addition to various other devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets, among them. They also have faster internet speeds, and more remote work opportunities, which Tarshis (2019) noted as relevant.

Nonetheless, these luxuries are often linked to the wider societal scope, and the various contexts within. Although television has historically brought people together, the current ability to watch content on various devices can also lead to division (Tarshis, 2019). In the US alone, studies have shown that there are significant differences in the content being consumed within rural and urban areas (Tarshis, 2019). The rival viewing habits are impactful to the curation of content, from their financial funding means to their global distribution means (Lotz et al., 2019).

In general, most television content is funded by third parties, such as private and commercial funding companies (Arnie, 2018). Generally, these parties may be involved in some of the decision-making processes, or, at the very least, in requiring updates on how these decisions are being made. On that account, television producers must remain careful and measured in their approach to the market (Herbert et al., 2019). Failing to do so, may limit longer term market expansion (Herbert et al., 2019).

Currently, the television industry is experiencing a scarcity of certain subscribers (Tefertiller & Sheehan, 2019). For broadcast producers, that scarcity has manifested into cable-cutters, where only some 40% of Americans, 18 to 60 years in age, rely on cable subscriptions now (Sherman, 2020). Unsurprisingly, the 18- to 29-year-old demographic has been the most difficult to maneuver because most of these viewers have never utilized cable (Flynn, 2023). The rest of the cord-cutters have cited expensive cable prices, in relation to streaming costs, behind their decision to leave (Flynn, 2023). A decision that has proven fruitful for streaming companies, and cancerous to those that still broadcast cable programs (Stoll, 2020). A large sample of current cable viewers also subscribe to streaming, and when finances tighten, they, too, could cut cords (Sherman, 2020). By 2030, the cable and satellite penetration rates are expected to reach 79% (Flynn, 2023). If that occurs, the cable industry may finally die.

The death of cable could, in some respect, be the death of broadcast television, and that could prove costly for a variety of reasons. Coupled with extensive job layoffs and inventory losses, cable providers would also experience massive subscriber losses, and would either need to adopt a hybrid business model or go off-the-air, to survive total financial annihilation (Stoll, 2020).

In her study, Stoll (2020) demonstrated that hybrid business models are becoming more popular because they are attractive to advertisers concerned with reaching a larger audience. In addition, by offering a mix of free and paid content, hybrid business models can reduce subscriber churn and improve consumer lifetime—a deciding factor for those fighting the fight for subscriber retention (Stoll, 2020).

Challenges and Triumphs

Retention. Subscriber retention is composed of many divergent components—and although the research behind effective strategies remains optimistic, many businesses are still encountering various issues. However, to minimize these issues and to diminish losses, Simanjuntak et al., 2020, recommend that businesses switch barriers. In doing so, businesses will be able to build trust and transparency (Simanjuntak et al., 2020).

In recent years, the knowledge and capability required for sustaining customer relationships always returned to these two values (Wanniarachchi, 2021). In the TV market, recent analyses indicated that the pursuit of trust through transparency can assist television producers who attempt to grow their production companies (Moran, 2020). Furthermore, Moran (202) also claims that the implementation of new technological platforms, such as streaming, can enhance this level of growth.

An enhanced level of growth constitutes an expanded line of consumers, and an expanded line of consumers demands a certain degree of retention. Although trust and transparency are crucial components of subscriber retention in the TV market, Sherman (2020) claims that the primary factors typically revolve around financial flexibility and the ease-of-use of products and services. Retention occurs when consumers are satisfied. Turnover occurs when consumers are dissatisfied (Sherman, 2020).

Causes of Turnover. The causes of cable subscriber turnover are rather obvious. However, few cater to the idea of usability. Regardless of industry, most consumers prefer convenience, and since streaming can be more flexible than cable, most consumers will utilize "ease of use" in deciding to change subscriptions and, in turn, switch allegiances (Lessiter et al., 2001).

The allegiance switch is also reflective of the extremely competitive nature of the current TV market. Since the early 2010s, subscribers have been presented with a variety of different streaming service options, and depending on the technology involved, a variety of different devices upon which to subscribe to (Jose, 2021). In some respect, the TV market is overcrowded, as is the inability to retain TV subscribers (Jangra, 2018).

That inability is the result of faster internet downloads speeds and mass consumer dissatisfaction with broadcast cable providers (Jose, 2021). Many subscribers retain their cable provider's internet and telephone services but choose streaming over cable because of rising costs and inflation. Furthermore, consumers who eventually choose streaming over cable cite monopolization as a primary reason for their dissatisfaction (Jangra, 2018).

Despite these harsh realities, turnover rates are hardly slowing down, and could, very likely, increase exponentially. While some Americans remain tethered to broadcast television for the moment, many more, especially those of the younger demographic, are choosing to flee. Most of them grew up with the Internet, will remain loyal to this landscape, even if they could become part of the larger retention problem (Wayne, 2018).

Retention Rate(s). As costs swell, and inflation rises, many businesses are losing loyal consumers. Considering that 67% of returning consumers spend more than new consumers, most businesses must compute their consumer retention rates in an effort to thrive and boost brand recognition. The absence of a proper CPR results in the absence of a proper consumer (Lessiter et al., 2001).

Ascarza et al., (2017) identified that approximately 85% of consumers reported that companies could do more to retain them, and about half of top executives reported that retention was their top priority. Still, the other half begged to differ, and retention rates continued to plummet to the point that about 49% of those same executives admitted that they were unhappy with their retention strategies, all together (Ascarza et al., 2017).

Retention Strategies. On that note, Matthews-El and Bottorf (2023) encourage businesses to employee several, crucial strategies. On top of building loyalty through shared values, businesses are encouraged to pursue feedback, and to excite their clients and customers about potential changes. Since those changes can occur visually, their effects can be presented visually too (Stoll, 2022).

The computational approach of advertising offers this option. In this approach, TV producers can exchange information through automated auction, marking exposure by the data available in the chosen individual's device (Malthouse & Maslowska, 2018). Furthermore, Perlich et al., 2014, claim the specific device will help producers determine how to frame their message, who to address it to, and when to deliver it.

During these types of exchanges, retention will often take centerfold. However, retention can only be reached when the detached parties are first identified (Gao, et al., 2022). At that point, business leaders are required to actively invest in solidifying their relationship with each individual subscriber (Gao et al., 2022). If they do, subscribers will reciprocate their feelings, and positive changes will be mutually experienced (Gao et al., 2022).

Leadership. Changes cannot be achieved without good leadership. A key catalyst to organizational success, an effective leader promotes the well-being of the organization, and is, thus, measured on his actions, the attitude of his followers, and the satisfaction of this client base. In that sense, effective leaders will motivate themselves and those around them too (Madanchian et al., 2017).

Leaders that motivate can improve quality performance and enhance productivity in the workplace (Onjoro et al., 2015). These leaders can also establish commitment and raise awareness of company goals (Steinmann et al., 2018). From there, the same leaders will create an inspiring vision that will accentuate the attractiveness of goals, and, in turn foster a work culture that supports cohesion (Steinmann et al, 2018).

A cohesive work force allows leaders to continue to develop business strategies that will benefit the entire organization. Bass (1885) noted this cohesion emerges from the process of transforming followers by (a) heightening the value of chosen goals, (b) encouraging them to replace self-interests with team interests, and (c) activating their inner role model to support the company's mission.

In most organizations, the mission is comprised of the company's core values. In the TV organization, many of these values concern the subscriber, and their return loyalty to the brand itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, brand engagement can only emerge in an organizational environment where the strategic core consists of consumer motivation and satisfaction (Chang, 2000).

Consumer Motivation-Satisfaction. Despite this, good leaders recognize that satisfaction technically emerges from motivation. To motivate those around them, good leaders must first identify what drives people. In the TV world, this is examined through ratings. Strong viewership numbers imply strong brand loyalty, and, together, the two imply that the retention rate is stable (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A secondary method of examination stems from focus groups. Generally, focus groups divide people into active and passive viewer groups (Adams, 2000). Adams (2000) noted that recent focus groups revealed that viewers invest in TV programs based on love, perceived content, and a strong comfort level with their chosen programs. The lack of these traits has shown to diminish ratings (Adams, 2000).

For all that, however, good leadership is not pervasive. It is rare and precious, and can take years to fully realize (Bass, 1985). In most industries, leadership is nurtured over time, and often found encompassing different traits (Hiew & Leow, 2016). Currently, there are five models of leadership: (a) laissez-faire, (b) autocratic, (c), participative, (d), transactional, and (e) transformational. All five models of leadership have been directly linked to customer satisfaction (Hiew & Leow, 2016).

The first style of leadership is considered hands-off. In this model, the amount of supervision and feedback is minimal, and the leader will typically allocate certain duties and responsibilities to his subordinates (Hiew & Leow, 2016). Alternately, the second leadership style, the autocratic form of leadership, is very involved in the supervision and feedback processes. In fact, in this model, the leader will employ coercive tactics to enforce rules and manipulate people into decision-making (Cherry, 2015). Unlike the laissez-faire model, where leaders are generally tolerant, the autocratic style is often the opposite, confounded with negative performances and high turnover rates (Schaubroeck et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the third leadership model is participative, and in this model, the leaders are both tolerant and communicative. Together, these two traits have shown to increase team performance and productivity. However, the shortcomings of this type of leadership are high time costs and inapplicability in high-stake situations (Rahmani et al., 2018). Coupled with external market changes, where leaders are often expected to make reactive decisions quickly and on their own, and this leadership model begins to unravel (Wang et al., 2022).

The fourth model of leadership, referred to as transactional leadership, does not have this problem. In this model, leaders use rewards and sanctions to make individuals pursue their own interests in the name of the greater organizational good (Jensen et al., 2019). Precisely, they offer both pecuniary and nonpecuniary awards to motivate both employees and consumers to participate in the decision-making process (Weibel et al., 2010).

Where the model falls short concerns the nature of the goals involved. In most cases, the transactional model is focused on shorter goals and gains (Jensen et al., 2019). However, the effects of both traits can be impersonal and suppress creativity, and, in turn, decrease performance and retention – a dangerous cocktail of bad leadership (Weibel et al., 2019).

Although transformational leadership, the last model on the list, can often mirror transactional leadership, this type of model is characterized by an ambition to foster a sense of understanding between leaders and followers. In this model, leaders typically try to formulate organizational goals as desirable, share this grasp with their employees, and sustain the company vision in the long run (Wright et al., 2012). Even though these traits could be risky and disruptive, they do help companies remain honest and ethical, and, in the TV industry, these options are extremely valuable (Jensen et al., 2019).

Summary of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this multiple case study, I explored the strategies television producers use to increase subscriber retention. The purpose of the literature review was to rigorously examine the research topic by synthesizing relevant professional and academic literature to produce insights and valuable information for the reader. Thaler and Sunstein’s (2015) nudge theory focused on the means to which television producers might employ factors of motivation to increase subscriber retention. This study’s qualitative research method and multiple case study designs allowed for an extensive and thorough breakdown of the phenomena in conjunction with the Baldrige Excellence Framework and Walden University’s Consulting Capstone guidelines. Researchers (Giese & Cote, 2000; Sherman, 2020; Schaubroeck et al., 2017) demonstrated that subscriber turnover creates significant and far-reaching organizational costs that affect markets worldwide. For that reason alone, the notion of subscriber retention is undeniably critical in the television industry, where these same subscribers routinely encounter situations that affect their adaptability, flexibility, convenience, financial restraints, and loyalty (Adams, 2000; Chang, 2020; Lessiter, 2001).

Despite the occasional complicated image of television leaders, and the associated high subscriber turnover, television employees are often hard-working and attentive to consumers (Rybenicek et al., 2017; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2022). The potential turnover of television employees prevents future economic growth and, by extent, declines future sustainability (Moisescu & Gică, 2020). Consequently, Thaler and Sunstein’s (2015) nudge theory offered leaders various choices for increasing consumer satisfaction and motivation, both of which are responsible for influencing retention (Thaler & Sunstein, 2015). Furthermore, McClelland’s (1985) human motivation theory presented several motivational factors to help support subscriber retention (McClelland, 1985). Other investigators enhanced McClelland’s theory by identifying important motivational factors relevant to television producers (Pardee et al., 1990; Rybenicek et al., 2017). A balance of these factors proved fruitful for both consumer satisfaction and retention (McCelland, 1985). Thaler and Sunstein’s nudge theory became synonymous with increasing and maintaining subscriber retention in the TV industry.

Transition and Summary

In Section 1, I used Thaler and Sunstein’s nudge theory (2008), as the conceptual framework for television subscriber retention. Television producers can successfully retain subscribers through positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions. In this section, I also summarized academic literature regarding successful retention reported for television subscribers in East Tennessee.

In Section 2, I present several new components of the study, to include restating the purpose statement, expanding upon the role of the researcher, the selection process for study participants, and a thorough description of the qualitative research method, research design, population, and sampling. Moreover, the project section includes a discussion of ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, validity and reliability, data saturation, and the transitional paragraph for Section 3.

In Section 3, I will introduce the research study results, the summary results of the research study findings, presentation of the findings, detailed discussion on the applicability of the findings to the professional practice of business, and the theoretical exploration for how and why the results are relevant to enhance business practices. In addition, I will also discuss the implications for social change by making recommendations for improvements to television producers and their specific employees, communities, and societies, as well as suggestions for the overarching television industry. Finally, in Section 3, I will provide recommendations for further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers. The target population consisted of five senior television producers from three production companies located in the east Tennessee region of the United States who have developed successful strategies to retain subscribers. This study could contribute to social change by providing some strategies television producers use to retain subscribers and maximize community presence. Contributions to social change could lead to the creation of improved television programming that both informs and educates consumers. In Section 2, I explain the researcher's role, the selected qualitative research method, and the case study design in full detail. As the researcher, I also justify the reasons behind the chosen participants, population, and sampling and the appropriate steps necessary to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In Section 2, I will also present an overview related to the participants' confidentiality and privacy requirements, ethics in qualitative research, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability and validity, data saturation, and the transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers. The target population consisted of five senior television producers located in east Tennessee region of the United States who developed successful strategies to retain subscribers. This study may contribute to social change by providing strategies television producers can use to retain subscribers and maximize community presence. Moreover, contributions to social change may lead to the creation of improved television programming that both informs and educates consumers.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton, 2015). I am one of the producers at a local TV production company that is home to the majority of the study's data. Of the five producers participating in this study, one is a personal friend I have worked with for over 10 years. The other four producers are colleagues I had shared resources and strategies with over that same amount of time. In both instances, my role as a researcher did not affect the collection of data. To mitigate bias during the interview process, I was transparent and reflexive about my own preconceptions and relationship dynamics with my fellow participants and their experiences and beliefs. For consistency, I used one standard interview protocol, performed member checking after the collection process, and reached data saturation.

Participants

When designing study protocols and procedures, researchers are urged to establish eligibility criteria for their respective participants to minimize errors and validate findings (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). For this study, participants met the following criteria: (a) be 18 years or older, (b) have more than 3 years of experience as a producer in the television industry in the East Tennessee region of the United States, and (c) have used effective strategies to increase television subscriber retention. Although other members of a production company or crew may influence the strategies behind television subscriber retention, my intention was to focus this study on producers because of their direct relationship with shareholders and their expectations, which is an approach recommended by Herbert et al. (2019).

Before conducting research, however, a researcher must first develop strategies necessary for gaining access to participants. Johl and Renganathan (2010) claimed that the most effective strategy revolves around a researcher’s reputation for consistency and integrity. The authors believed such an approach is achievable through the application of a gatekeeper, a person in the community who can vouch for the researcher (Johl & Renganathan, 2010). To find the appropriate gatekeeper, I intended to conduct research into local TV personalities who have positively contributed to the community and industry alike. Once the appropriate participants were identified, I established a trusting relationship with each individual, which assisted me in the identification of participants who met the study’s criteria. Without this critical step, the partner organization could deny access to their employees’ participation (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). As a requirement, I followed Walden University’s IRB guidelines for protecting the participants’ rights.

I implemented the following strategies to gain access participants (1) sent e-mails and placed phone calls to potential participants, (2) sent a preinterview questionnaire that focused on their experiences and characteristics, (3) incentivized their participation by offering them a copy of my doctoral study, and (4) granted a review opportunity of my final findings and doctoral study. By taking steps to demonstrate transparency with my participants, I had the opportunity to demonstrate transparency with the partner organizations. Shenton (2004) referred to this step as a prolonged engagement and valuable opportunity to solicit participation in a study. However, for researchers, prolonged engagement does not always guarantee alignment.

For alignment to occur, Austin and Sutton (2014) identified that researchers must have a thorough understanding of their research methodology to ensure that their research questions align with their participants' knowledge and understanding of their respective industry. For my study, I achieved this alignment by frequenting the websites of partner organizations, identifying their key staff, and sending e-mails to introduce myself. In my initial e-mail, I introduced myself, the nature of my study, and my research desire. If individuals from the organizations responded to me, I intended to conduct a preinterview process to gauge their level of interest, understanding, and expertise on the business problem. When an individual demonstrated interest in the interview, I sent an informed consent form to the participant that outlined the extent of the communication efforts. In these forms, I illustrated the eligibility criteria of my study. I only accepted participants who met the study inclusion criteria.

Research Method and Design

When conducting research, a researcher can use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method design (Sivarahaj et al., 2016). The qualitative method is the research method for this study. Austin and Sutton (2014) used the qualitative method to explain how human behavior is shaped within the framework of social structures. Although a variety of research methods can be used, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2002) argued that it is a researcher's responsibility to select the most appropriate tool for their specific study. Researchers use a qualitative methodology to draw meaning from the experiences and opinions of the participants involved (Almalki, 2016). By using a qualitative research method and a multiple case study design, I explored strategies that television producers use in the television industry to retain subscribers.

Research Method

By selecting the appropriate research method and design, researchers can answer the applied research questions and, in turn, solve the applied business problem (Asenahabi, 2019). The three research methods consist of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Asenahabi, 2019). Qualitative researchers can use techniques that can help ensure data analysis and quality (Sargeant, 2012). The qualitative method was appropriate for this particular study because I could explore the why and how of strategies that television producers use to reduce the loss of subscribers. Barnham (2015) mentioned that the qualitative method is fruitful for understanding the perceptions of the selected participants and discovering potential underlying patterns behind a phenomenon associated with them (Barnham, 2015).

In contrast, researchers use quantitative research to quantify problems by focusing on statistical tools to collect and analyze data (Barnham, 2015). This type of research relies on an impersonal voice to probe for answers (Park & Park, 2016). Researchers use the quantitative method to construct hypotheses so they can proactively determine what data they must collect and measure (Noyes et al., 2019).

The quantitative method is not appropriate for studies where researchers are focusing on understanding the personal experiences of their subjects (Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method is more suitable for larger samples where substantial data are collected and numerically analyzed (Barnham, 2015). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because I would not have been able to garner answers to the how and why aspects of strategy formulation.

Mixed-method research consists of both qualitative and quantitative research designs (Schoonenboom, 2018). Researchers typically use the mixed-method research method to expand their forms of data collection (Almalki, 2016). By using this method, researchers can explore diverse perspectives and uncover relationship that exist between the intricate layers of multifaceted research questions (Shorten & Smith, 2017). However, for this study, I did not choose the mixed-methods approach because I did not plan to use numbers to attempt to answer the how and why questions.

Research Design

I selected a qualitative, multiple case study to explore strategies that television producers use to increase television subscriber retention. I evaluated four qualitative research designs: case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative. Researchers choose a case study design as a structure to help them examine issues related to the industrial and economic spheres of life (Mills et al., 2010). Specifically, qualitative researchers employ individual or group interviews, observation, and document review from their respective target population (Sargeant, 2012). The specific research design chosen for this study was a case study. A case study is either a single or multiple case design (Mills et al., 2010). Therefore, a multiple case study was more appropriate than a single case study for my particular research topic because I was interested in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the strategies that television producers in east Tennessee employ to increase television subscriber retention and not television producers in various regions across the United States. A multiple case study uses literature, gray literature, media, reports, and more to establish an understanding of the case involved (Heale & Twycross, 2017). These same researchers are also able to gather the appropriate evidence for their particular business problem (Yin, 2009). In this study, I used a multiple case study to attain an understanding of the types of strategies broadcast television producers use to increase television subscriber retention in the television industry.

Researchers recognize the amount of influence they are able to exert on the entire research process. (Austin & Sutton, 2014). For ethnographic researchers, who go beyond mere observation and actively engage with people in the field, this approach is helpful (Baskerville & Myers, 2015). Hammersley (2016) claimed that the importance of interpreting what people say is the cornerstone of ethnography-based studies, and obtaining distinctive biological experience is only accessed through interviews or elicited documents. However, this can only occur when researchers are honest and transparent about their own subjectivities first (Austin & Sutton, 2014). The ethnographic approach was not appropriate for my study because I did not intend to study producers' cultural backgrounds using retention strategies to increase subscriber retention.

Researchers may also consider the phenomenological design for their study. With this design, researchers can study the way things appear upon first glance (Emiliussen et al., 2021). This design refers to understanding phenomena by way of interpreting people's experiences (Grünewald, 2004). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for my study because I did not intend to explore common meaning and shared themes of participants' lived experiences.

Finally, researchers could use the narrative design to explore the scope of their research problem and to prioritize peoples' stories as imperative and empirical forms of knowledge (Bruce et al., 2016). Researchers must ensure they follow the story, as stories can fragment into many different directions (Moen, 2016). Researchers must collect these elements and write a narrative experience that connects to the main research (Bruce et al., 2016). Because this study did not revolve around the life stories of producers, the narrative design could have had an invasive effect, especially given that the associated data revolve around participants' lives. The narrative research design did not align with the purpose of this study. Although human experience is essentially always narrated (Moen, 2006), storytelling is subject to fabrication. The narrative research design was not the right choice for this study because my intent was not to focus on the life stories of any individual television producers.

Population and Sampling

In a qualitative study, the goal is to recruit enough participants to achieve data saturation (Gill, 2020). For qualitative researchers, results are generally achieved through small sample sizes with rich, in-depth data (Hennink et al., 2019). However, to reach the point of saturation, researchers must first review the data (Hennink et al., 2019). Only after reviewing the data will the researchers be able to generalize the results and outline their relationship (Auer et al., 2015). The population for this multiple case study consisted of five senior television producers from three television production companies in the southeast region of the United States. The five participants were responsible for successfully implementing strategies to increase television subscriber retention.

Researchers can use various sampling methods, such as convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling to meet certain criteria (Etikan et al., 2016). Convenience sampling and purposive sampling are the most common sampling techniques because they align with qualitative research designs. A type of nonprobability sampling, convenience sampling means that the researcher's target population meets certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, ready availability, and/or the willingness to participate, regardless of obstacles involved (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling concerned the idea that the selection of participants will often be guided by the researcher's personal judgement, normally influenced by experience and expertise as well as participant knowledge and relevance to the study (Mpofu, 2021). Unlike purposive sampling, in random sampling, also known as snowball sampling, the selection of participants is not guided by personal judgment or relevance to the study. This type of sampling focuses on referrals by initially selected participants until the sample is adequate and full (Mpofu, 2021). I chose the purposive sampling technique to facilitate me selecting appropriate and informed study subjects.

A researcher should know when he has collected enough data for their study. In qualitative research, a critical milestone is the point of reaching data saturation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In this study, to help me decide when I reached data saturation, I used data triangulation to compare collected data between interview and company document data sources. Since triangulation is important (Natow, 2019), the use of multiple techniques was critical. Guion (2002) claimed that researchers utilizing data triangulation can improve the validity of their research and overcome potential biases. To begin this part of the process, researchers must first create a sampling plan (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). A sampling plan specifies the sampling method, the sample size, and the procedure for recruiting participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Natow (2019) claimed that interviews and second-source document review can help garner rich data and reach data saturation. In addition, the researcher can verify accuracy and enhance data reliability through asking follow-up questions during the interview, through data triangulation, and through member checking (McGrath et al., 2019).

To achieve data saturation, I used in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method for the study. I organized interviews into interview sessions consisting of 10 identical core, open-ended interview questions that included follow-up or probing questions, with five senior television producers. Weller et al. (2018) claimed that interviews allow participants to explore topics in a detailed manner, which accumulates more saturated data sets.

I reached data saturation when no new information emerged during the interview process. I believed that data saturation in my study occurred when no information was collected from participants, and that the data triangulation of this information between multiple data sources would enhance reliability and validity. To gather information clearly, I used a digital tape recorder and a second, backup recording device. To guarantee confidentiality and discretion, I did not disclose critical information concerning the participants or the companies which they represent.

Before the interview process began, I informed the potential interviewees that participation in my study was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participant at any juncture without punishment. To mitigate bias, I implemented member checking, reviewed company documents and interview notes, and acquired feedback from the doctoral study committee at Walden University.

Ethical Research

As the sole researcher, I was responsible for providing participants and their respective organization(s) with an informed consent form that addressed ethical concerns and protected them during the research process, which aligns to a process noted by Byrne (2001). As a doctoral student at Walden University, I adhered to specific research guidelines, obtained approval from the university's IRB, selected individuals who met the appropriate criteria, and began the data collection process. After the IRB approved my study, I distributed the informed consent form with the IRB approval number (07-31-23-0669929) and approval expiration date (07-31-24). The informed consent form consisted of five features: (a) the introduction of the researcher, (b) the background of the study, (c) the reason for the interview, (d) the method the interviewer and the interviewee would follow, and (e) an invitation to participate in the study. The form also included IRB contact information to encourage participants to contact the appropriate authorities (Walden University, 2016) if they wished to do for further information

I composed an e-mail to each participant and attached the consent form within the e-mail I sent to each participant. In the e-mail, I requested the participants to confirm that they fully read and understood the consent form by responding as, *I consent,* e-mail return the form. Although penalties were not applied to those who chose to discontinue participation, as the researcher, I had to receive the participant's consent for to participate in the interview before the interview process began, which aligns to a process that Manti (2018) identified as appropriate for researchers to follow interviewing participants. I provided participants with a 1-week opportunity to choose to continue to participate in the study or to withdraw (Appendix C). Participants were also provided with an opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time; in writing, verbally, or via e-mail, by declaring that they no longer wish to participate in the study.

Edwards (2005) identified that researchers should explain that study participation is voluntary, and that participants can withdraw whenever they choose. For those who wanted to participate, participation was optional. Różyńska (2022) implied that compensation may encourage potential and/or actual participants to withhold or misrepresent information, which are critical for their recruitment eligibility or continuation in research. Similarly, Różyńska (2022) noted that participants can accept interviews without demanding monetary compensation. To avoid coercion or manipulation, participants did not receive compensation or incentives for choosing to participate in the study.

Therefore, the entire scope of the research followed already-established ethical guidelines from Walden University, which include provisions from the Belmont Report.

The Belmont Report is one of the leading ethical standards that aims to protect subjects and participants in clinical trials or research studies (Sims, 2010). The research included the ethical protection of participants' anonymity and confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009). Walden University's IRB oversees this part of the research process by evaluating the level of potential harm involved. Specifically, the chosen participants were assured that their personal information will not be released or presented to the public. Barrow et al. (2021) asserted that researchers must maintain the right to fair treatment and ensure the right to privacy for all participants. In this study, I attempted to make sure every aspect of the research process became transparent, allowing participants to connect more openly with me. In addition, I had the ability to promote welfare and safety during my research, allowing participants to contribute to the overall body of knowledge in my specific field.

To fully protect participants, researchers are required to keep all written and electronic forms of data related to participants or their employers in a file in a locked computer, or inside a locked storage place, for at least 5 years (Schreier et al., 2006). IRB officials required that researchers must store data to maintain the confidentiality of those who participated. After 5 years, I will destroy the data through erasure, deletion, and/or shredding.

All participants were offered ethical protection throughout the course of their involvement in the study. Participants had the opportunity to camouflage their names by utilizing aliases. The process of implementation consisted of (a) an assigned identifier instead of participant name, (b) an assigned identifier to label participant data, and (c) an assigned identifier to reference participants in the results. For example, all participants were assigned labels, such as P1–P5, to distinguish interview data for coding and transcription purposes. Yin (2018) indicated that the utilization of aliases and the discretion of information provides the necessary amount of protection for participants. I ensured the data from this study remains confidential and I have stored the data in a locked cabinet to meet the safety protocols established by the Walden University IRB.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers need to use data collection instruments to confidentially retrieve information from participants in the study (Yin, 2018). During this research study, I acted as the primary data collection instrument. In qualitative research, when conducting interviews, the primary data gathering tool is considered the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Although gathering company data and documents will help encompass some of the data for this study, most of the data was gathered through in-depth and semistructured interviews. By employing interview questions (Appendix A) and following the interview protocol (Appendix B), I conducted semistructured interviews for in-depth explanations of the strategies participants used to sustain consumer subscriptions. Unlike unstructured interviews, semistructured interviews can be reliable for purposes of data collection and data management (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018).

In qualitative studies, data collection methods consist of interviews, as well as secondary data sources, such as archival documents and focus groups, and a blend of other sources (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Secondary data sources can provide researchers with supplementary data that will strengthen the findings within the overall study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Secondary data sources can provide researchers with an alternative look into the overall business phenomenon, and a second opinion too (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this study for data collection, I used interviews and internal company documents, such as employee handbooks, human resource records, production budgets, access to company leaders' strategies and business plans, company archives, and any relevant information accessible through public records.

For this doctoral study, the interview protocol (Appendix B) was comprised of semistructured interviews using open-ended interview questions, which is an approach identified by Sánchez-Guardiola Paredes et al. (2021) as effective in gathering data from participants. The interview protocol contained guidelines for opening the interview, guidelines to use during the interview, ending dialogues, auditory recording permissions, and portions of the informed consent form.

To increase credibility and improve data saturation in the research process, I requested data documents from company leaders. These included training materials, protocols, manuals, reports, agreements, operational records, meeting minutes, and digital, audio, and video documents. By acquiring this type of data, I was able to better understand the operating procedures and techniques used by the organizations, which aligned with a recommendation that Hennink et al. (2019) suggested researchers follow.

The data collection process involves the interview process and the information obtain from within. Although the interview process can help obtain in-depth data, the participants must first be vetted during the pre-interview process (Mozersky et al., 2020). Upon completion of the pre-interview phase, participants enter the semistructured interview phase. Under normal conditions, face-to-face interviews occur in semistructured environments that use open-ended questions. Participants had the choice to participate in an interview remotely. However, in order to achieve the desired amount of saturation, researchers are encouraged to use multiple questions (Weller et al., 2018). Multiple questions can increase the consistency of the findings and, in turn, authenticate an ethical approach to the data collection process (Mozersky et al., 2020). Moreover, multiple questions may create multiple sufficient answers. Without sufficiency, researchers will fail to understand the world from the participants' point of view (DeJocnkheere & Vaughn, 2018).

Data Collection Technique

Qualitative researchers often use the interview as the primary tool for collecting participant data (Rashid et al., 2019). However, before an interview begins, the informed consent form and subsequent recruitment letter must have met Walden University IRB's stamp of approval. In the recruitment letter (Appendix C), which was sent via e-mail, as the researcher, I listed and described the intent of the interview process, the design of the research study, and the participation criteria. I requested participants to return the signed consent form via e-mail, in which they stated that they agreed to participate in subject study. At that point, as the researcher, I finalized the participant selection process by contacting via e-mail or telephone each participant to answer any remaining questions.

For this study, I scheduled interviews for five senior television producers that operate in the eastern region of the United States. After agreeing to participate, I met each participant at a specific location, commenced the interview by thanking each of them. I provided a synopsis of the research topic and started to record the conversation. During the interview process, I relied on the interview protocol to help guide the interview questions. Interview questions are expected to align with the qualitative method (Yin, 2018). Although the review of documents and records are also part of the data collection process, the primary data technique was conducted through participant interviews.

The interview protocol consisted of the following primary steps; (a) arrive at interview location on time and exchange greetings with the appropriate participant, (b) hold brief discussion with participant to set the tone and mood, (c) give consent form to participant to read and sign, (d) obtain participant's permission to record the interview via analog or digital recording device, (e) commence the interview by asking the initial question, (f) ask follow-up questions if the participant's response(s) influence the need, (g) conclude the interview session and give thanks to the participant, and (h), depart the interview location. During the interview process, I did not share any personal opinions with the participants. I also scheduled each interview based on each participant's availability.

The interview process is an extension of the interview protocol. Within the protocol, researchers are able to maintain a constant flow to the interview itself, and, in turn, solidify the study's reliability (Yin, 2018). In Appendix A, I listed the interview questions that I asked. Similarly, the protocol for interacting with research participants is listed in Appendix B. These tools are helpful in acquiring rich data and identifying the associated themes. Specifically, Yin (2018) claimed that the semistructured interview is an example of this type of tool. With semistructured interviews, researchers are able to underline the subjectivity of the experience of the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The semistructured interview process allows for the collection of in-depth data that evolves from observations built on the job achievements and failures of the participants involved (Jamshed, 2014). In that sense, researchers will use the semistructured interview format to present participants with the comfort and space to address difficult questions (Yin, 2017).

There are advantages and disadvantages to the various data collection techniques formed within this study. With face-to-face interviews, the interviewer and the interviewee can learn to understand each other and develop a relationship (Dialsingh, 2008). Researchers also gained a deeper perspective with the participant and the industry in which they operate. With in-person meetings, the rapport between the researcher and participant increases, leading to more clarity with the answers and the questions of the interview itself (Dialsingh, 2008).

To enhance rapport and clarity of collected data, as recommended by Park and Park (2016), I conducted face-to-face interviews with limited interruptions in a location preferred by participants. By choosing a specific location, the participant's comfort level will increase, and the subsequent data will be richer. Yin (2017) claimed that a comfortable participant is more likely to volunteer detailed information when answering potential interview questions. By using this design, I was able to conduct member checking with all participants to ensure that I correctly interpreted their responses. As the primary researcher, I evaluated whether the quality of the data refracted any limitations. Since the semistructured interview method is only operational after significant groundwork, the researcher is responsible for controlling and certifying all data collection and quality management.

Open-ended interview questions illustrate this line of thinking clearly. The use of these questions (Appendix A) in a semistructured interview allowed participants to respond in a candid and comprehensive manner. I was able to record their answers in journals and other forms of note taking. However, note-taking can only prove effective in collaboration with audio recording. Otherwise, I risked missing key points, as noted by Jamshed (2014), during the interview process. When I used note taking, I also asked follow-up questions in order to verify whether the answers given are, in fact, true and clear. The interviews occurred in private meeting rooms to ensure privacy. Before the beginning of the recording process, I asked participants for their consent to record the interview. After they consented, the interview was taped using both an analog and a digital recorder. I informed the participants that I might be asking follow-up questions before I asked the first interview question. After the meeting concluded, I thanked the participants for their time and information.

A primary, significant advantage of conducting semistructured, face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions is the ability for researchers and participants to connect on a deeper level, where the exchange of information is enriched and fortified (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). As a result, researchers are expected to disseminate the resulting data throughout the rest of the study and the greater sphere of their respective field. Another advantage of face-to-face interviews concerns the emotional support nature of the process itself. McIntosh and Morse (2015) indicated that the physical presence of the interview could allow interviewers to identify any discomfort or unease on the part of the interviewee, and, by extension, offer a break or some sort of emotional support. These types of interview processes give researchers the buttress to uncover hidden information (Deterding & Waters, 2018). They are also advantageous in the pursuit of qualitative research.

In contrast, a significant disadvantage of semistructured, face-to-face interviews concerns the researcher's own bias, and how this bias could influence the responses of the interviewees (Yin, 2018). However, the ability to compose thoughtful questions could mitigate partiality in some of the answers (Azad et al., 2021). Some of the disadvantages of interviews consist of the sharing of sensitive information and the rising travel costs to meet in person (Yin, 2018). The duration of the interview process depended on the length and depth of the responses and follow-up questions. If the researcher can mitigate bias, the disadvantages would be limited, but if they cannot, the investigative process would be riddled with errors. To limit disadvantages, researchers must avoid personal opinions and encourage participants to offer unbiased feedback.

Member checking refers to the process in which the researcher uses to restate, paraphrase, or summarize that information that was acquired from the participants of the study (Birt et al., 2016). Similarly, Candela (2019) asserted that member checking can verify if the interpretation of the resulting information is correct. In my study, I conducted member checking with all participants to ensure that all of their responses were interpreted correctly. Birt et al. (2016) determined that for researchers to interpret data correctly, they must first align their interpretations with the feedback of participants.

Member checking proves essential in accurately reflecting the ideas and thoughts of participants. Furthermore, member checking is used to increase the trustworthiness of the overall study.

After the interview process, I provided participants with the opportunity to address potential changes to their final answers. When I was provided with a response from the participant that indicated a need to make an adjustment to my interpretation, I incorporated the appropriate adjustments. I restated their viewpoints. My intention was to ensure participants had the opportunity to confirm, deny, or correct my interpretation of their viewpoints.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers must first organize and track their data using a platform that allows tracking and storage of the data (Broman & Woo, 2018). These techniques consist of recording, journaling, and reporting of different occurrences during the investigative process of the study (Yin, 2018). Microsoft Access, Microsoft Word, NVivo, and digital audio records are some of the applications used to carry out these techniques. Yin (2018 suggested that journals are an effective means to recording observations and jotting down interview notes. Lester et al. (2020) recommended that researchers assign codes to data sets from interviews for identification purposes during the data collection and data analysis phases. In my study, during the interview process, I used the following tools: a legal pad, a laptop with Microsoft Word, and a smart phone with a camera and a voice recorder. To ensure the integrity of the data in the records, I considered nonverbal signs and any unusual occurrences, I also used password-protection for all my Microsoft Word files. My approach to recording data included that each participant was assigned a unique code. By incorporating that design in the coding process, if established specific codes for all participants utilizing labels to name and number the data with respect to separation. All participants were assigned a letter and a number; for example: P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Post-investigation storage is vital to protect all the participants in this research study. Without viable protection, it is not possible to secure data in a dependable manner (Surmiak, 2018). I stored data on an external hard drive on a password-protected laptop. I also backed up this data to another, smaller drive, and saved a third copy on an encrypted cloud server.

Moreover, I used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, NVivo, to unify and evaluate the data from the Microsoft Word transcription part of the collection process. Although there is various software that can be used in helping facilitate informed qualitative research, I used NVivo because it is dependable and efficient at collecting and analyzing data.

The primary tool of analysis in this study was data transcription. The raw data consisted of participant responses that were filter through the collected data and into the appropriate analysis software to execute specific tasks. Zamawe (2015) clarified that NVivo12 is technically appropriate for qualitative research. The investigative component of my study will include the use of NVivo12. A unique, but crucial element of NVivo is that the software can perform thematic coding, by selecting a section of a text, like an interview transcript, and then tagging it with a node (Dhakal, 2022). Because I interviewed at least five producers, NVivo's obvious robustness proved indispensable.

Moreover, the ability to understand the software-at-hand proved the same. Despite this, some of NVivo's features, such as invalid file formats, could prove problematic. Zamawe (2015) contended that although NVivo's speed and accuracy are innovative, the researcher must always remain in control. I ensured that all participants data was collected and stored securely, as well as ensuring adhered to Walden University's IRB requirements. After 5 years pass, I will delete this data from my laptop and flash drives, and destroy any paper archives, according to Walden University's guidelines.

Data Analysis

Before data is stored and deleted, the data analysis process must first occur. This process commences with the pursuit of beneficial data. Once collected, researchers use a variety of methods to analyze data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). One such method is data triangulation. With this method, researchers can enhance the study's credibility and trustworthiness (Forero et al., 2018). The concept of data triangulation designates the pursuit of quality during the data analysis stage of the study. Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulation in qualitative research, such as (a) methodological triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theoretical triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). In this study, I used data triangulation. In qualitative studies, data triangulation helps increase validity (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) stated that researchers use data triangulation in multiple case studies to identify patterns in the data gathered from interviews with study subjects and from at least one other source to corroborate and/or explicate interview data. Since data analysis consists of organizing, reviewing, coding, and developing themes, this type of triangulation, therefore, seems appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis typically begins with the researcher gathering tangible documents and recorded interviews and supplementary information connected to the research topic-at-hand (Yin, 2018). The data that emerged from this process enabled the researcher to adequately use the data triangulation approach. In qualitative research, the data triangulation process helped find meaningful themes and patterns in my study (Kiger & Varpio, 2008). To find meaning within the research, researchers should prepare to obtain information from both verbal and written evidence. After they obtain verbal and written evidence, researchers can employ data triangulation to collect data and merge data from several sources (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Additionally, researchers use data triangulation from the interview data in an effort to enhance the worthiness of the sources involved (Yin, 2018). In this qualitative study, I acquired data from company documents and interviews. After I organized the collected data in Microsoft Word, I imported and divided the information within NVivo. The data from these sources converged as a single source within NVivo12.

Qualitative researchers collect and analyze data through five distinct stages: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2018). To collect data, I started by conducting interviews and collected archival company records. After compiling data, researchers begin to disassemble and reassemble this data based on codes and groups based on Yin's five-step approach (Yin, 2018). Other stages of the data analysis process include identifying themes and applying meaning (Yin, 2018).

In my five-step approach, after I had collected and analyzed the initial data, I disassembled the data into a preliminary category based on the information obtained from the literature review. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) claimed that during this process, the researcher will separate hidden clues from the original data. This procedure of formality and coding is known as disassembling (Yin, 2017). When disassembling data, I member checked the data with my participants. If member-checking revealed any new or revised information, I adjusted my codes and categories where necessary.

Yin (2017) stated that the data analysis process can withdraw interpretation from the collected data. Therefore, researchers have to make sense of the information emerging from the involved participants. I was able to transfer the raw data from Microsoft Word into NVivo12 software. I was then able to compile the data. Yin (2015) noted that researchers are able to compile data after it has been organized. I used auto-coding found inside the NVivo software to identify and extract patterns of similarity and prevalent themes. Researchers are encouraged to inscribe the name of the software and the version in their study because each new version release can vary significantly from the previous one (Dhakal, 2022). Dhakal (2022) claimed that NVivo is a CAQDAS program that aims to assist qualitative researchers with the collection, organization, visualization, and reporting of their data. The NVivo 12 software can also detect similar words and sentence patterns to help facilitate specific themes associated with these codes (Nowel et al., 2017). Processing raw data than can then be disassembled into fragments using the codes is also an extension of NVivo (Yin, 2018). I used the NVivo12 software to collect, analyze, and code data into groups and categories with identifying themes.

During the final step of the five-stage data analysis approach, I reviewed the data, to identify recurring thematic elements from the research process. Depending on the context involved, some of the occurrences emerge in the forms of words or phrases with shared similarities. Birt et al. (2016) observed that the member checking process itself supports the accurate interpretation of the research data. Furthermore, analyzing themes is a necessary step for outlining repetitive words and phrases in the resulting data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

For this study, theme identification occurred through the utilization of the NVivo computer software. Yin (2009) declared that during the final phase, researchers would discover conclusions about their study. I expected that the findings from my study would align with Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) nudge theory, and I discussed and highlighted how these findings align with the current and existing literature associated within the field. I used a qualitative method so that I could identify themes related to strategies that television production producers used to increase television subscriber retention. Srivastava and Hopewood (2009) affirmed that qualitative data analysis is a rather iterative procedure. Because of this revelation, researchers can cluster ideas within the collected data to better understand the information within (Henry et al., 2015). In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the entire study, I confirmed that the themes that evolve from the final data aligned with the primary research question.

Reliability and Validity

Noble and Smith (2015) identified reliability and validity as the concrete criteria necessary for measuring the quality, or soundness, of qualitative research. The lack of soundness disrupts the researcher's ability to achieve trustworthiness (Yin, 2016). For studies that employ contextual analysis, the researcher must create and keep a chain of evidence that increases data dependability (Yin, 2018). However, dependability is only reached when the research is proven reliable (Marshall, & Rossman, 2016). As a consequence, researchers measure the validity of participants' experiences to determine whether the study method and the research design are sufficient for the greater context of the study (Leung, 2015). Researchers can establish reliability and validity in their respective studies by implementing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) broadly accredited criteria for ensuring trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017). The criteria consist of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. I augmented the reliability and validity of my study by taking steps to make sure my study fulfilled all four criteria.

Reliability

Peels (2019) claimed that reliability is the researcher's ability to replicate a study or its findings using the same research methods and data collection techniques. In addition, certifying the accuracy of the data collected will also ensure reliability (Lang & Wilkerson, 2008). Last, researchers must choose reliable instruments to collect accurate data (Nowell et al., 2017). If they fail to collect accurate data, researchers will risk the data's quality and interpretation (Yin, 2016). To confirm reliability in my study, I collected data through interviews that were semistructured and in-depth. Rigor was achieved through the utilization of data triangulation and member checking. By practicing member checking, I supported the accuracy and credibility within my data. Birt et al. (2016) and Yin (2016) both claimed that after member checking occurs, the data triangulation of several sources will increase reliability and validity, making interpretations and recommendations of the study dependable. The researcher must still analyze the effects of their decision to ensure reliability. In qualitative studies, researchers achieve dependability by utilizing interview protocols (Forero et al., 2018). Journal note-taking, interview summations, and data analysis tools are some of the means of validating dependability. By allowing participants to review interview summations, the reliability of the study will increase (Birt et al., 2016). After interviews were transcribed, participants were provided interview summaries to ensure the validity and accuracy of my interpretation of their responses. This was an IRB recommendation intend to enhance the dependability and future validity of the research.

Validity

Lueng (2015) opined that validity is an imperative concept in solidifying the validity of the study's claims (Leung, 2015). Validity in qualitative research consists of credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Yin, 2009). Researchers can enhance validity by testing the trustworthiness of data they collect in their study (Nowell et al., 2017). Noble & Smith (2015) noted that for qualitative research to be trustworthy and valid, it had to rely on researchers' observations and recordings. Valid data is one of the building blocks of quality research (Yin, 2016). The entire concept of validity can only exist when researchers obtain evidence through various and divergent sources (Yin, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility signifies a match between the original research data and the researcher's interpretation of this data (Fusch et al., 2018). In Lincoln and Guba's (1985) research criteria, reliability evolves from trustworthiness, and the lack of, prevents the findings from being credible. In my study, I developed credibility by using member checking. With this process, the researcher is able to increase the credibility of the study without compromising the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To enhance the credibility of my study, I used the research tool of member checking. Researchers use member checking as a means of validating their observations and explanations (Birt et al., 2016). Birt et al. (2016) asserted that member checking is the most credible because it helps clarify the responses of the participants involved. Campbell et al. (2016) also noted that researchers can use data triangulation to enhance the credibility and validity of their studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the application of the study's findings to other studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). When researchers provide participants with rich and detailed interview questions, they are also providing the readers with the opportunity to determine how transferable the data can become within detailed contexts (Yin, 2018). The more contexts that exist, the more data can be formed (Yin, 2018). Future researchers with parallel studies can help verify the current study's transferability. In that context, I identified an appropriate sample size and applied sampling techniques which would enable other researchers to conduct a similar study with the prospect of similar findings.

Confirmability

For qualitative researchers, confirmability refers to the reader's ability to confirm that other researchers can verify the data formed within the context of a particular study (Stahl & King, 2020). Researchers have demonstrated that confirmability improves when researchers describe how data accuracy was obtained during the research process (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers have also demonstrated that the notion of confirmability also hinders on the researcher's ability to interpret data without involving bias (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Member checking allows most researchers to validate and confirm the participant responses that compromise that data (Yin, 2009).

Without proper checking, researchers' personal biases could influence the results of interviews. By using member checking, however, researchers can minimize mistakes and help confirm findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). They can also help to verify accuracy and credibility of the collected data (Leung, 2015). In my study, I used member checking to reduce bias and generate trustworthiness and to achieve confirmability.

Dependability

Researchers can confirm the accuracy of the collected data by revisiting participants with follow-up questions that generate dependability. In this study, participants were asked follow-up questions for additional clarity. Follow-up questions allow participants the freedom to discuss relevant topics meaningful to them. They also help provide the basis for quality and validity (Hennink et al., 2016). For my study, follow-up interview questions helped me to obtain rich, in-depth data. Under normal circumstances, most researchers can use face-to-face interviews to help achieve dependability. In my study, I was able to conduct face-to-face interviews.

Transition and Summary

My purpose in this qualitative, multiple case study was to focus upon strategies that some television producers successfully used to increase subscriber retention. Section 2 included the purpose statement of the doctoral study, a comprehensive explanation of the researcher's role, absolute facts regarding the study participants' eligibility criteria, and a sample of the population size. Section 2 also included the justification behind the chosen qualitative research method and design, data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and adhere to the ethical protection of participants. Finally, Section 2 included the methodological precision for certifying trustworthiness in reliability and validity, and data saturation. In Section 3, I present the research findings, an application to professional practice, a list of implications for positive social change, and various recommendations for action and further research. In addition, I also share my final reflections and the conclusion and relevance of my findings.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers. In this study, I attempted to identify leadership practices that support consumer retention and maximize community presence. Data were collected through one-on-one semistructured interviews with five senior television producers who have successfully retained consumers as well as created social change in their specific communities. The findings included three themes for subscriber retention: (a) authentic storytelling, (b) knowing your audience, and (c) being easy to work with. In Section 3, I present the findings of this research, detailing potential applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do broadcast television producers use to retain subscribers? Using a qualitative multiple case study, I collected data by interviewing five senior television producers in the eastern Tennessee region. In the study, the participants are identified as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. I used semistructured interviews to gather data, which involved asking participants open-ended questions that provide information on the strategies they have employed to retain subscribers. To improve triangulation for this study’s multiple data collection methods, I reviewed and collected data from archival company records, and I performed member checking. I recorded and transcribed all five interviews from the audio recordings and had each participant member check their respective interview. After the participants conducted member checking and confirmed the veracity of their statements, I utilized NVivo 12 to code the data.

I used NVivo 12 to pinpoint recurring themes in the information participants provided during their interviews and information about the partner organizations I had found within archival company records. In full, I compared member-checking documents, the interview transcriptions, and notes as well as company records on subscriber retention to support data validity and reliability. I analyzed the data using Yin’s (2018) five steps for data analysis: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The data compilation process involved rereading the interview notes and organizing the information from interview statements in relevant order. This process enabled me to connect the data to the overarching research question and to establish familiarity between the participants’ interviews and my interpretation.

In addition, I used an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis so that I could disassemble the data into smaller contained sections that were labeled according to themes. I coded each line provided by participants and avoided repetitive and unrelated statements that occurred during the interview. During the reassembly phase, I identified patterns by cross-checking experiences and events related between different participants. I also arranged shared responses to the same questions in one column and repetitive, unrelated responses in another column until credible and reliable patterns emerged. After this revelation, I proceeded to interpret the data, examining it from a broader perspective and narrowing down prominent points of information. I determined three primary themes for my study: (a) authentic storytelling, (b) knowing your audience, and (c) teamwork.

Theme 1: Authentic Storytelling

The first theme, which emerged from the data analysis process, was authentic storytelling. Based on the interview responses, all five participants (100%) discussed the importance of telling good, genuine stories to retain subscribers; they all noted that this is particularly imperative for television producers. Each participant worked for a company that promoted authentic storytelling. For all five participants, who were experts at creating true crime programs, authenticity was important in the selection of cases. In fact, for P1 and P2, the selection of cases determined how authentic the stories were. For instance, both P1 and P2 aimed to develop projects that feature unique legal angles, interesting court charges, or forensic details potentially overlooked by other productions companies in considering the same case. They also aimed to develop projects that allow the audience to assume the role of armchair detective by providing the audience sufficient information to form an opinion or to theorize along with how real detectives consider the evidence. This process motivates viewers to keep tuning in or to stick around.

P2 noted that this motivation is part of a larger context, one in which TV projects feature a degree of predictability within their stories. P3 and P4 noted that predictability informs the type of stories being told. Specifically, P3 and P4 claimed that subscriber attraction and retention may increase when television producers tell fresh, contemporary stories where viewers can predict certain elements. In fact, P2 noted that these types of stories are fertile ground for broadcast television producers, even more than streaming, because they are designed around the concept of weekly air dates, act breaks, and cliffhangers. The triumvirate of broadcast television production is also the triumvirate of compelling storytelling: authenticity, predictability, and relatable characters. In a 2023 research study conducted at the University of Florida, Webster and Campbell explored how viewers personalize program content. In the study, Webster and Campbell (2023) identified the concept of assumed similarity, a process by which a person assumes that fictional characters share characteristics and values similar to their own. Although their sample was relatively small and collecting data in person was difficult (because of COVID-19), the authors confirmed that most people relate to characters who are similar to them (Webster & Campbell, 2023).

For TV producers, telling stories with relatable characters is essential for subscriber retention. P1 claimed that familiar characters are generally authentic, attracting viewers to form connections with the stories they are watching. P2 claimed that unfamiliar characters lack authenticity and, therefore, threaten to disconnect viewers from these stories. P5 warned that producers have to be cognizant of their characters' DNA. Whether characters are rooted in reality or based on fictional traits, viewers expect the characters to be authentic. If the character is altered in any manner, they may alienate the viewer, especially if the change is external. P5 shared an example of this when working with a specific network. For years, P5 was producing stories for a particular true crime program where the stories were authentic using a primary voiceover actor with a recognizable female voice. One day, without explanation, network leaders changed the voice actor. P5 had reservations about the change. After the first new episode with the new voice, viewers voiced their displeasure; there was backlash, and the ratings dropped. Eventually, viewers acclimated to the new voice, and ratings returned to normal. However, the damage was evident in that the program never recovered in terms of its original appeal.

All the participants' company websites and online profiles confirmed these same thematic underpinnings that they develop and create television content that specializes in authentic storytelling with reliable characters and that they do so with their many audiences in mind. All the participants' companies also provide various forms of legal documents and visual style guides that illustrate their ability at not only being easy to work with, but also in producing content that addresses client expectations. P1 and P2 focused heavily on true crime programs across several different networks. Every one of these programs shares similar DNA. They are budget friendly to make, compelling to watch, and accessible on most platforms. P3's and P4's company executives exemplified similar traits, but they also focused on a specific demographic for a specific platform. The majority of their programs are accessible through streaming, but they follow authentic narratives, which are relatively cheap to produce. Of the three, the DNA of P5's company executives was, perhaps, the most distinct. On top of producing accessible, budget-friendly content, the company executives also support the production of niche projects, such as feature-length and short-length films. In addition, the executives also offer consultation services to other production companies and production efforts. Despite some of their differences, all three companies contribute to their local communities by acquiring many local employees and creating many local projects.

The authentic storytelling theme also corresponds to this study's conceptual framework. A defining trait of the Thaler and Sunstein's (2015) nudge theory is the desire to have freedom of choice and to feel in control of choices. When creating authentic stories, television producers can influence (freedom of choice) viewers to watch them (control of choice). Moreover, television producers can use nudges to predictably steer the direction of the programs so that viewers will be drawn to watch them in the first place (Sunstein, 2015). Therefore, the participants in this study demonstrated that they can create the type of content that attracts viewers. All five participants remarked that having the right content helps to reduce viewer turnover too.

Last, the authentic storytelling theme correlates to some of the studies I cited in my literature review. For instance, all five participants currently employ a hybrid model of TV production. They create content for both cable and streaming platforms. Participants reported that hybrid platforms are popular with content creators who need advertising dollars and who need to reach wider audiences. Simanjuntak et. al (2020) noted that business leaders who build trust and transparency with their consumers are more likely to retain them. The five participants claimed that TV producers bear a responsibility in not only attracting and retaining viewers, but also in helping deter ratings. P1 through P5 all claimed that overall ratings decrease when networks and producers alter a program's three-pronged fabric—authentic stories with predictable elements and relatable characters—for something new and foreign to viewers. To ameliorate the problem of lower program ratings, all five participants agreed that television producers have to develop an understanding and knowledge of the likes and dislikes of their audience. Otherwise, ratings are affected, and subscribers will continue to leave.

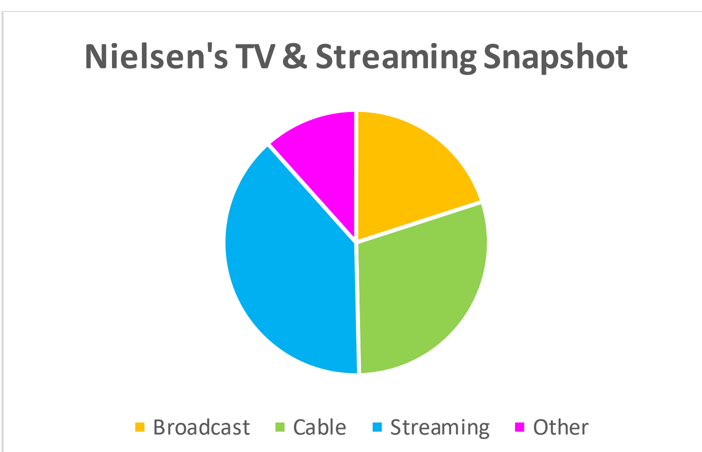
Theme 2: Knowing Your Audience

The second theme, which emerged from the data analysis process, was knowing your audience. In the television industry, producers generally need two key ingredients to measure TV audiences: a data source, a combination of panel and big data capable of properly representing viewing audiences and technology, to properly capture and correctly identify viewing data (Nielsen, 2023). In addition, producers also need metrics to make sense of viewing data for all their respective stakeholders (Nielsen, 2023). The five participants in this study employed some mixture of these ingredients to learn more about their audience, and all five were successful in different ways. P1 and P2 revealed that their companies employed network-approved focus groups and social media reactions to gauge audience interest in their programs. All five participants perused online reviews about their company to measure the effectiveness of their production efforts in the community and beyond. P3's and P4's focus was far more microscopic. Since the majority of their content is streaming-based, they rely on their main client network to reveal viewership ratings and tastes. Similarly, P5's measurement of audience interest relied on a network and co-production partnerships. P5 warned that producers should understand that the project should always serve the goals of the client and its audience rather than a producer's own creative wishes.

All five participants responded to the interview question of, "What barriers did you encounter in implementing strategies to retain subscribers?" Although all five experienced similar barriers related to time and money, as is normal in the television industry, they all agreed that changing viewership habits were a growing concern, especially in relation to cable versus streaming. With streaming on the rise, Fatemi (2022) noted that modern viewers have become less concerned with appointment viewing and more concerned with serial and binge viewing. Modern viewers prefer to watch content on their own terms than to carve out time for future watching. Many young viewers also prefer to watch content in one sitting rather than in piecemeal sessions over time. Fatemi (2022) also noted that more advertising dollars are being spent on younger viewers than older viewers because younger viewers have proven to have a longer lifetime value. P4 and P5 believe that the introduction of instant social media, such as TikTok and YouTube, is in some ways responsible for these side effects. Figure 1 and Table 1 depict the nature of the changing television landscape more clearly.

Figure 1

Preferred Viewing Methods of 2023



Note. From "Streaming grabs a record 38.7% of total TV usage in July, with acquired titles outpacing new originals," Nielsen Ratings (2023).

Figure 1 was captured by Nielsen Ratings in July 2023, when streaming had started to overtake cable more (Nielsen, 2023). In December 2023, this same figure was published again. Although the numbers for broadcast, cable, and other platforms had risen somewhat, streaming remained in the lead. Holiday-season viewers skewed the data. The following table indicates the prevalence of streaming in 2023.

Table 2

Preferred Streaming Platforms in 2023

Platforms	Under 1%	1% to 2%	3% to 6%	7% to 10%
Disney+		2.0%		
Hulu			3.6%	
Max		1.4%		
Netflix				8.5%
Other			5.1%	
Paramount+		1.0%		
Peacock		1.1%		
Pluto TV	0.9%			
Prime Video			3.4%	
Roku Channel		1.1%		
Tubi		1.4%		
YouTube (main)				9.2%

Note. From "Streaming grabs a record 38.7% of total TV usage in July, with acquired titles outpacing new originals," Nielsen Ratings (2023).

Table 2 was introduced by Nielsen Ratings in July 2023, when streaming had started to overtake cable more (Nielsen, 2023). These numbers were based on the overall 38.7% streaming. In December 2023, this same table was published again. The numbers for each streaming service had altered slightly, and notable platforms, such as YouTube (main) and Netflix, remained in the lead. Nielsen (2023) noted that linear streaming platforms, where content is delivered in continuous, scheduled streams, were removed. Only those streaming platforms where content can be consumed in binge and nonappointment means were counted. The only outlier in this table was from other platforms, which included any high-bandwidth streaming on TV that had not been separated.

As a result, all five participants utilized ratings to gauge the viewing habits of modern audiences. For P1 and P2, ratings were provided by their network affiliates, and, generally, if projects were renewed, the ratings were strong. P1 and P2 also used focus groups, whose participants gauged the interest of audiences, and, if content was desirable, the volume of this content would increase. Since P3 and P4 relied heavily on streaming, however, their ratings package was different. Instead of traditional methods, P3 and P4's network client used streaming numbers to gain a deeper understanding of audience interest. P5 utilized a mixed method of traditional and streaming numbers to learn about their audience, relying on both networks and streaming platforms. Neither P3, P4, nor P5 used focus groups or any other forms of audience measurement tools.

During their respective focus groups, the participants learned similar, but different traits about their current audiences. Although P1 and P2's broadcast and cable viewers tended to skew older, some of their audience was also younger and largely women-centric. In some cases, depending on the identity of the network affiliate, the majority of P1's and P2's audiences were either women or minority groups. P1 and P2 stated that they learned to develop content that appealed to specific demographic groups they reached. Otherwise, they risked alienating them. For P3 and P4, most of their content was consumed by 18- to 35-year-olds, the majority of whom were non-White, Black Americans that were drawn to fresh, contemporary stories. With the help of their multiple viewers, P3 and P4 also found that the desired content runtime for these viewers was between 78 and 84 minutes, a number less affordable through traditional TV platforms, and more accessible through streaming. For P5, access to concrete audience information was less available than the other four participants. P5 relied on their network affiliate and social media reactions to measure the effectiveness of their projects. All five of the participants cared what their audiences desired.

Regarding the importance of audience desires, all five participants believed that understanding the needs of their audiences (i.e., their customers) was a primary key to their business growth. More specifically, they utilized the study's primary and secondary conceptual frameworks to elucidate this idea within their organization. They used nudge theory to create content that would steer people in certain directions (Thaler & Sunstein, 2015), and the human motivation theory to reward them for their committed watching with additional content (McClelland, 1985). In that sense, they also exhibited traits of both transactional and transformational leaders because they keenly cared about client feedback, and the feedback of their own creative staffs that were largely responsible for content creation. In the TV industry, both leadership styles are effective for gaining a competitive advantage, and, in turn, attracting and retaining clients and employees (Londoño, 2021). In my comprehensive literature review, I found similar information to correlate with the knowing your audience theme. When television producers know their audience, they can increase audience loyalty, which can increase ratings and long-term sustainability.

Theme 3: Teamwork

The third, and final theme, which emerged from the data analysis process, was being easy to work with. The implication of this theme relates to the relationships TV producers have with their clients. In all participants' cases, those clients represented a mixture of broadcast networks, cable networks, streaming services, syndication services, and co-producers that helped to create and develop certain projects. In their study on strategic alliances and social networks, Yue et. al (2022) discovered that partnerships have a positive impact on sustainable performance, and that information sharing plays a role in mediating those partnerships between trust, cooperation, and the aforementioned notion of sustainable performance. All five participants were adamant that their collaborative efforts were most rewarded when they developed trust and cooperation with their selected array of partners. However, all five participants also recognized that trust and cooperation represented a two-way road and required both parties to remain in sync with each other during the entire creative process.

P5 noted that having a reputation for teamwork is a desired quality for most clients since when individuals are considered difficult to work is often associated with creative and monetary friction between the two partners. Additionally, P5 noted that being difficult to work with limits both partners from reaching creative ceilings and collaborating again in the near future. By choosing to collaborate, both partners will create a positive and trusting atmosphere that will allow passion to nourish and diversity to flourish (Morney, 2022). When working together, P5 notes that partners will develop project bible; a document that outlines the plots, settings, characters, and themes of a television project, and will use this data to visually guide this partnership to collaborate creatively. The other four participants also used show bibles to propose and share ideas between themselves and their partners. In fact, P3 noted that part of the creative and collaboration process revolves around pivoting, whether it is moving resources around, creatively problem solving, or other developing other projects if the current project runs out of steam. Despite these circumstances, Jain et. al (2018) noted that creative parties thrive when they are willing to collaborate. Otherwise, creative processes could become disrupted and cause a breakdown in business operations (Jain et. al, 2018).

Being a team player also means that producers are able to proactive in their decision-making processes. In general, TV industry executives tend to be reactive and base creative output on popular trends. However, a proactive stance allows for far greater creative output. When participants were asked, “How did you address the (afore-stated) barriers to implementing strategies that effectively retain subscribers?” P2 and P3 listed several options. They discussed the notion of constantly developing new projects, even if they had a solid slate of current ones. They also claimed that making current projects more visually stylistic, telling stories with an edge, or hiring good actors as proactive measures to avoid and overcoming certain barriers. They further discussed being creatively flexible, in the sense of sharing information, creatively, with their partners. P3 noted similar measures, with the inclusion of longer runtimes (for ad revenue increases) and developing disciplined strategic plans that looked past the first year of operations and focused more on the next 5 or 10 years. Because of the chaotic nature of the television industry, P4 was less future-focused, and more concerned with the present. As P4 identified, having a reputation as a team player is essentially the ability to both understand and apply the triangle of TV production in all facets of production. P4 noted three principles to this triangle: (a) good and fast TV that was not cheap, (b) good, cheap TV that was not fast, and (c) fast, cheap TV that was not good. Moreover, depending on the client's needs, producers who can adapt to any of these three principles are truly valued and appreciated.

Having a reputation as a team player correlated to my primary conceptual framework, the nudge theory, because when presented with the idea of collaboration, producers have the freedom to choose the creative partner they want. They also have the freedom to influence their partner to choose them. Ryan & Deci (2000) noted that leaders are afforded more opportunities when there is a willingness to collaborate (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The literature also implied that collaboration allows partners to realistically achieve more goals together rather than alone. Both sentiments demonstrate an alignment with the literature. All five participants concluded that collaboration has been responsible for their many successes. All five participants' organizations were built on the foundation of creative collaboration, and much like their subscribers, were themselves retained by clients for their specific traits. Having a reputation as a team player could become a vital ingredient to sustainable business performance.

To identify the primary three interview themes of this study, I interviewed five participants and conducted member checking of their interviews. I also reviewed archival company records and perused the company's websites. All four steps allowed me to achieve reliability and validity within the study. I reached data saturation after validating that no new data emerged after data triangulation.

Applications to Professional Practice

The applications of this research to professional practice include providing TV business leaders with strategies to attract and retain subscribers. Since the start of the streaming revolution, streaming providers have tried to overtake cable providers, and, in 2023, they finally did, surpassing cable services as America's most-watched viewing platform (Nielsen, 2023). This cultural shift reformed how television is being made, and will continue to be made, for the foreseeable future. The research findings indicated three primary themes (a) authentic storytelling, (b) knowing your audience, and (c) being easy to work with. In my literature review, I confirmed the type of TV programming that viewers expect, value, and prefer. I also outlined that TV business leaders that employed these values within their organization could foster further commitment and engagement from their viewers (Tarshis, 2019).

The study participants understood that demonstrating authentic principles was vital to attracting and retaining subscribers to their programming. By telling authentic stories on television, producers were able to establish commitment between their programs and their viewers. However, to extend that commitment, producers were also expected to create programs that follow certain criteria. In most cases, viewers preferred programs that featured a degree of predictability within the narrative, featured relatable characters, and allowed for the ability to play armchair detective. Additionally, viewers preferred programs that felt fresh and contemporary, and for all five participants, contained stories with unique and interesting legal angles, court charges, and forensic details.

Viewers were also more willing to remain committed during the program, and to return to future programming, improving the ratings of the program itself (Adams, 2000). The study participants also discovered the streaming, rather than cable, was becoming the focal point of how many viewers, especially today, preferred to watch programs (Nielsen, 2023). The participants' responses in this study partially supported my findings in the literature review I conducted: offering streaming options is helpful in the process of not only attracting viewers, but retaining them as well (Nielsen, 2023). Each subject reported that when they began to invest in streaming options, they attracted additional viewers. They also began to focus additional resources in finding and creating authentic stories.

The second finding of this study was about producers who learn about their audience. Participants underscored that knowing your audience consisted of several levels: network-approved focus groups, social media reactions, online reviews, and even the study of current TV ratings. The application of all four levels allowed participants' partner organizations the ability to capture and identify viewing data, efficiently, and to share this data with respective stakeholders, efficiently (Nielsen, 2023). All five of the participants noted that stakeholders were more willing to support current projects and fund future ones, when the data showed room for growth. As related to the conceptual framework of this study, business growth generally occurs when TV producers take the time to understand their consumers, and, in turn, reward them for their loyalty (McClelland, 1985). In the TV industry, that growth occurs when viewers are presented with content that recognizes and satisfies their viewing habits (Londoño, 2021). Most of the participants in the study demonstrated that when creating and developing projects, producers must always keep their audiences in mind.

The final finding of this study regards teamwork. The study's participants revealed that TV producers thrive in collaborative, harmonious environments that involve trust and cooperation between themselves and their partners. Since creative endeavors are part of TV production, the lack of collaboration and the rise of friction can be destructive to the creative process (Jain et. al, 2018) The ability to share, and, when difficult situations arise, the ability to pivot, are part of the being easy to work with mantra that television producers preach. Partnerships flourish when partners are in sync and when the decision-making process involves both parties. In their responses, the five participants emphasized that their enduring existence in the TV world was reflective of this notion, and the threat of diminishment appeared when they were less willing to be aligned with their partner's visions. In some cases, that threat was further accentuated when producers went against their partner's visions too.

The study's findings may help business leaders who aim to develop and implement consumer retention strategies. Félix and Maggi (2019) found that consumer satisfaction bolsters profits and helps business owners stay competitive. In my study, all five participants emphasized this understanding, and the understanding that consumer retention occurs when viewers' needs and preferences are met. In the future, business leaders should focus on their consumers and partners by meeting organizational goals and enabling their own professional and personal development.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study can contribute to positive social change by helping various television businesses identify strategies to retain subscribers and maximize community presence. Subscriber retention and community-oriented strategies may improve work environments and reduce business costs. The reduction of business costs could increase the profitability of the business, bolster consumer satisfaction, and help businesses stay competitive. By staying competitive, businesses can operate at maximum level, driving productivity and output growth (Félix & Maggi, 2019). Specifically, TV business leaders could use these results to provide additional leadership roles in their industry and within their communities.

The participants of this study highlighted current viewer habits as critical factors behind organizational productivity and consumer retention. The results of this study indicated the required steps leaders need to take to understand viewer habits. Otherwise, leaders will encounter various financial challenges that will prevent them from staying competitive. The results of the study also demonstrated that leaders who understand their consumers are also able to understand their employees, therefore, expanding the business, and offering employees and consumers a degree of heterogeneity with wages and products. When wages and products are more expansive, employee retention becomes more readily achievable.

Recommendations for Action

The study involved two key data sources: semistructured interviews with five business leaders and a review of archival company records. All five participants provided a fresh perspective by sharing their experience and expertise. Three themes emerged from the data. The following recommendations align with the conceptual framework, the literature review, and the emergent themes from participants' responses. The study's findings will provide broadcast television producers with credible subscriber retention strategies that will improve viewer engagement and employee satisfaction. The first recommendation for action for broadcast television producers is to tell authentic stories. All five participants recognized that subscribers are drawn to programs with authentic stories. Authentic stories are essential for keeping viewers' attention, especially since they tend to feature insider access to specific case details.

The second recommendation for action for broadcast television producers is to know their audience. Producers who get to know their audience are able to create content that could satisfy and enrich their lives, and, by extension, earn their loyalty. Chang (2020) suggested that loyalty occurred when consumers felt that the products they consumed improved their life. The final recommendation of action is being easy to work with. By being easy to work with, producers are able to foster a unified atmosphere of creativity and collaboration with all of their partners and continue to earn their approval for financial and managerial support. Additionally, having a reputation for teamwork can inspire harmony, and with harmony, the ability to create feels less constrained (Jain et. al, 2018).

This study may benefit business leaders across all sectors by conveying the importance of understanding how beneficial the themes of authentic representation, knowing your clientele, and being uncomplicated to work with truly are. Going forward, television producers should focus on developing plans and finding partnerships that support creativity, collaboration, and transparency. I will share the findings from this study with all study participants, local business leaders, and television-based companies. Further, if requested, I intend to share my findings and conduct presentations with various business leaders through the local Chamber of Commerce.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies broadcast television producers use to retain television subscribers. The research study included valuable information about successful subscriber retention strategies employed by five participants in the southeastern United States. Recommendations for future research include expanding the study beyond the southeastern United States. Although some of the study results may be transferrable to other geographic locations, some TV producers may select the results from my study based on their own interpretation of the findings, especially when television production companies have similar missions and values. Going forward, I recommend that future researchers consider investigating strategies to increase employee retention. Employees may offer different themes regarding leadership strategies for the retention of subscribers. Future researchers may also apply other research methodologies, such as quantitative or mixed methods research to investigate business strategies that impact organizational profitability through subscriber retention.

Reflections

The doctor of business administration (DBA) journey was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life. At Walden University, the DBA journey required a significant degree of aspiration, dedication, persistence, resilience, and patience. During my journey, there were many days of exasperation and many nights of self-doubt. It was a long and arduous path, but I continued to push on because I believed in the study. As a television employee and subscriber, I encountered many of the experiences described by my study subjects. As a result of these experiences, I became very interested in the research subject, and spent many years digging for the truth. Those years, and the DBA process itself, have proven invaluable, as the knowledge within has been essential in my personal growth. I have gained more insight into the personality of a television subscriber than I could ever imagine. After the completion of the study, I confirmed the amount of hard work and dedication that pours into the television production every day, and the love subscribers may feel for the content they subscribe to.

As a researcher, and scholar-practitioner, I understand that addressing researcher bias was crucial in analyzing data and conducting interviews objectively. To mitigate personal bias, I sent each participant pre-approved questions before commencing the actual interview. In addition, I utilized member checking to ensure that each interview was transcribed with limited bias. The findings of the study revealed the values of subscribers and the types of content they desire. I hope that the results of the study influence broadcast television producers to understand and embrace subscriber differences in the television market to continue developing desired content.

Conclusion

In 2023, streaming subscriptions officially surpassed cable subscriptions, stirring researchers to study the impact of both on current and future viewership models (Nielsen, 2023). The study process of comparing streaming subscriptions with cable subscriptions was advantageous because the findings from this study will be more meaningful and practicable for TV business leaders in understanding what their audiences want and what their clients expect, ultimately allowing them to develop strategies that can retain subscribers and positively impact their communities. Business strategies and strategic leadership protocols are crucial to bridging the gap between traditional cable subscribers and modern streaming subscribers. Also, the findings from this study can help fulfill a literature gap regarding employee retention in the TV industry because one of the outcomes of this study is that subscriber retention facilitates employee retention.

Subscribers desire a TV platform where they feel valued, are offered versatile programming choices, and can be affected in a positive manner. As a result, television producers must utilize emerging technology to satisfy subscribers and establish lines of feedback communication between creators and viewers. Strategic leaders can also provide the appropriate conceptual framework to combine subscriber attraction with subscriber retention. By implementing effective and proactive programming strategies, TV business leaders may increase and retain the number of their subscribers, which should augment organizational profitability and positive social impact, such as informative and educational programming, and creative and innovative jobs for community members.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions of this doctoral study are as follows:

1. What strategies have you used to retain subscribers?
2. What barriers did you encounter in implementing strategies to retain subscribers?
3. How did you address the barriers to implementing strategies that effectively retain subscribers?
4. What strategies were most effective to retain subscribers?
5. What strategies were least effective to retain subscribers?
6. What were the main customer issues that caused subscribers to not be retained?
7. How did you measure the effectiveness of the strategies to retain subscribers?
8. What were the key factors you took into consideration for creating strategies to retain subscribers?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

To prepare for the interview process, I will use e-mail as the primary method of contact and communication with prospective participants. I will introduce myself to the participants by explaining that I am a student working on my doctoral study in the business administration program in the management and technology school of Walden University. Although I do have an existing relationship with some of the participants of my study, I will still introduce myself and my objectives in the e-mail.

Once they agree to the interview, I will advise the participants that, in my scholarly opinion, retention strategies are the leading cause of organizational success. In addition, I will inform the participants that this study may affect social change by providing television subscribers with plans for improved subscriber retention in the television industry. I will also advise the participants that subscriber retention strategies may improve the sustainability of TV production companies in the east Tennessee region of the United States, by improving television content, and the lives of television subscribers in the area by creating broadcast programming that is both informative and enlightening. The explanation for my study will emphasize the exploration of strategies required to improve subscriber retention. The interview should take approximately 1 hour and will either be conducted at an agreed-upon location in person in Tennessee, or via a video conference option. The audio recording devices will be a laptop computer and a smartphone.

However, before beginning the data collection process, I will first send each participant the informed consent form as an attachment to the interview invitation e-mail.

In that e-mail, I will advise the participants that the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes, and I will encourage them to review and sign the form if they decide they wish to participate. Naturally, we will also discuss any questions and/or concerns that they may have. In doing so, I will ensure the participants that regardless of their choice, they will have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and without penalty.

After informing the participants of the scope of the interview and receiving permission to record these interviews, the interview will finally commence. At the beginning, I will verbally cite the date and time of the interview and implore the participants to state their designation and the name of their organization. Coupled with

To ensure confidentiality, participants will also be introduced with alphanumeric codes. The code will begin with the letter, “P,” and end with the appropriate number (i.e. P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5). Interviews will be conducted using a semistructured interview process. Additional questions may follow to clarify responses. Finally, water and snacks will be provided during the interview, and breaks will be made readily available.

At the end of the interview, I will discuss the member checking process with the participants, and explain that although their answers may vary in length, I will paraphrase their responses and, in turn, provide them with a copy for verification purposes. In that sense, I will request the participants to review the copies and provide any revisions within 5 days to solidify accuracy.

Of course, I intend to confirm with the participants that they understand that no response to this request will confirm their agreement with my interpretation of their responses. Finally, I will thank the participants for taking part in my study and provide my contact information for future correspondence. This ends the interview protocol.

Appendix C: E-mail Invitation to Participate in Doctoral Research

My name is Robert Ivkovic, and I am a graduate student working on a Doctor of Business Administration at Walden University. I have reached the point in the doctoral program where I am nearly ready to begin collecting data for my Capstone Doctoral Study. The purpose of my doctoral research will be to explore strategies television producers use to successfully retain subscribers. As a result, I wish to learn more about the type of methods that have been successful and the reasons why they have been successful. The results of this study may benefit television production companies.

The study results may benefit television company leaders by retaining enough by allowing them to meet the demands of their customers, and, therefore, reduce their turnover. For the study, I am seeking to interview producers who work in both television and film, and who have worked on different projects for different clients. The actual interview will be held in person or via video conference, sometime in the next few weeks, and would be scheduled for approximately 60 minutes, at a time convenient for you. The interview could be extended for additional questions and queries at the end of the allocated time.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please review the attached Informed Consent form for participation requirements. If you meet the participation requirements and wish to know more about participating in the study, please contact me via e-mail at XXXXXXXXXX or via telephone at XXXXXXXXXX. A response within a week of this e-mail being sent would be highly appreciated.

On a related note, I am willing to share more details about the research and the interview process during our initial conversation, and I am excited to work with you and share what I learn too.

Regards,

Robert Ivkovic