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Strategies Broadband Industry Leaders Use to Retain Customers

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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Anthony L. Carter Sr.

MS, University of Phoenix 2003

BS, Saint Joseph's University 1988

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Disparities in broadband access and the reliability of services are still a major issue for communities throughout the United States. Broadband information technology (IT) managers often lack effective customer retention strategies, which can seriously impact their organization's growth and profitability. This pragmatic qualitative project, grounded in Morgan and Hunt's commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, was to explore strategies employed by IT managers at broadband companies to retain customers and ensure financial viability and sustainability. The study included semistructured interviews with 10 IT managers from broadband providers in the Philadelphia region of the United States who possessed relevant expertise involving customer retention. Data was collected and analyzed using thematic analysis. Six themes emerged from the analysis: customer engagement, responsiveness to feedback, participatory customer involvement, accurate performance metrics, transparent communication, and leadership alignment. A central recommendation is for IT managers to adopt innovative communication strategies that foster stronger customer relationships and increase profitability. The implications for positive social change include the potential for IT managers to improve customer service that enhances digital access and equity for underserved communities, including seniors and financially challenged populations.

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Dedication

To my maker, thank you for the strength to get through this journey. To my son Anthony Jr., and my wife Kim, I know you both wanted me to be at many family events, but I could not. I can now take time and attend all the events and functions that you all have. I am so glad that I have two exceptional people who have sacrificed spending time with me and supported me in other ways. I am proud to be your father and husband and accomplish this goal so that you all would be more than proud to call me your dad and husband. To my father and mother (Lemmie and Stanley), thank you. I want to recognize all my siblings. I hope I have made you proud. I want to thank my chair (Dr. Dwyer) and all the faculty at Walden faculty. I have worked diligently with you and hope I have made you proud.

Acknowledgments

To Lemmie and Stanley Carter, Kim and Anthony Jr., my entire Carter family. I know this sets the bar high for the family, but if I can do it, so can you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

In Philadelphia, broadband access and high-speed Internet connectivity benefits residents who work, shop, and access school online. Disparities involving this access and use are associated with income, education, and race since broadband access is central to education, health, social status, economic standing, self-expression, and political participation (Forgie, 2022). Broadband and Internet users rely on the high-speed Internet for business, education, and personal needs (LaMarca, 2021). Eighty-seven percent of Americans now report using the Internet (LaMarca, 2021). There are approximately 1.3 million people across all of Pennsylvania without access to a wired connection capable of 25 Mbps download speeds and another 115,000 people do not have any wired Internet providers available where they live (LaMarca, 2021). Broadband users have continually increased due in part to the rise in the popularity of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets (LaMarca, 2021). Leaders of broadband or Internet service providers (ISP) must implement effective customer retention strategies and enhance customer experiences to maintain growth and profitability. LaMarca (2021) determined broadband Internet users in the Philadelphia region rely heavily on internet usage and the ability to choose a reliable provider for appropriate customer service. Broadband access in Philadelphia is essential for daily work, education, and personal needs. However, disparities involving access and reliability can exacerbate existing social inequalities related to income, education, and race, necessitating effective customer retention strategies by ISPs to maintain growth and profitability.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The general business problem is that broadband business leaders fail to retain customers. The specific business problem is that some broadband industry leaders lack vision and strategies to retain customers and generate new revenue streams.

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project was to explore strategies some broadband industry leaders use to retain customers and generate new revenue streams. Qualitative pragmatic research involves combining and borrowing from established qualitative approaches (Foster, 2023). The population was 10 broadband company leaders in the Philadelphia region who implemented successful strategies to retain customers. Implications for positive social change include the potential for broadband industry leaders to decrease unemployment, increase economic development in local communities, and improve living conditions of residents. Residents with the Internet can attend college online, find job opportunities, get consistent medical care, and live quality lifestyles.

Business leaders can improve society by learning lessons about customer retention. Those who increase profitability through improved customer retention contribute to society by improving employment rates, increasing local economic stability, and reducing local poverty rates (Bates, 2022). Broadband leaders improve society via lessons they learn from customer retention. Those lessons often lead to better customer experiences that allow them to retain customers.

Research Question

What strategies do some broadband industry leaders use to retain customers and generate new revenue streams?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are aspects or concepts that are accepted as accurate or factual in studies (Wilson et al., 2022). In this research project, there were four assumptions. I assumed participants answered questions truthfully and honestly. I also assumed, and can verify, that they did not withdraw from the study. In addition, I assumed business managers in broadband companies are subject matter experts with comprehensive knowledge of strategies to improve customer retention. Finally, I assumed 10 to 12 participants was sufficient to understand the topic.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control and may affect their ability to influence outcomes the studies (Merriam, 2021). In this project, there were three limitations. The first limitation was that accuracy of interview data relies on experiences and opinions of leaders of broadband companies. These perspectives may not represent the broader community of broadband industry leaders. The second limitation was the sample size, which may not represent or reflect views of all broadband leaders in different geographic locations, which impacted my ability to generalize study results to other broadband leaders with different views and needs. Finally, I relied on the honesty of

participants and the accuracy of supporting documentation to identify broadband industry leaders who implemented successful strategies to retain customers.

Transition

Section 1 included the background of the study involving strategies broadband company leaders used to retain customers and improve customer experience. I also discussed the problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, and interview questions. In Section 2, I review professional and academic literature. In Section 3, I address ethics, the nature of the project, data collection and analysis activities, and reliability and validity. In Section 4, I discuss findings and the implications for business practice, implications for social change, and further research.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Literature Review Opening Narrative

I conducted this literature review to answer the following research question: Why do broadband leaders lack strategies to retain customers and generate new revenue streams? I used the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, EBSCOHost, ProQuest, Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, and SAGE Journals. I used the following search terms: I used the following search terms: *customer service, managerial strategies, customer retention, organizational behavior, network providers, client support, performance management, wireless carriers, customer loyalty, business strategy, fiber optic services, service excellence, customer experience, leadership techniques, telecommunications providers, client relations, operational management, internet service providers, customer satisfaction, strategic planning, digital communication services, service quality*, and *broadband companies*. Of the 88 articles I reviewed, 86 (97%) were peer-reviewed articles or from business sources. Eighty-five (97%) had publication dates between 2021 and 2025. In Section 2, I address customer service and its effects on customer retention as well as broadband revenue and customer satisfaction.

I focused on the applications to the applied business problem, the conceptual framework, and technology and customer retention. I explored the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, including factors involving internal infrastructure and

external technology, organization, staff, and broadband leaders, opportunities, the broadband industry, and vendor support.

For the literature review, I used the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing as the conceptual lens to explore broadband literature and strategies for implementing customer retention, enhancing customer experience, and increasing company profitability. This study included information about broadband customers' behavioral responses to service failures, overpricing, and lost revenue.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The Internet is the fastest growing and most transformative technology of the 21st century. In just over 50 years, Internet penetration has surpassed 60% of the globe, connecting nearly five billion people (Asif et al., 2021). Although 87% of Americans now report using the Internet, more than a third of those Americans still lack broadband Internet access at home (Memon & Memon, 2024). The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) stated high-speed internet access is always on and faster than traditional dial-up access (Asif et al., 2021). High-speed Internet can include digital subscriber lines, cable modems, fiber, wireless, or satellite cables (Asif et al., 2021). Barriers involving patient portal uptake and use are linked with low rates of broadband internet access and could severely constrain the value of this technology (Memon & Memon, 2024). Business leaders should consider what has affected the internet's growth over the past decade. Customers value internet speed because it allows them to work, shop, play games, and access resources for school more easily.

Some broadband customers have complained about differences between services in urban and those in rural Pennsylvania areas.

The National Federal Communications Commission standard for what constitutes broadband internet service as of 2020 is 25 Mb/s download speed and three Mb/s upload speed (Memon & Memon, 2024). Approximately 93.5% of Americans can access fixed broadband at those speeds (Asif et al., 2021). Individuals who are 65 and older use broadband internet services less frequently: 63.1% of that group used the Internet at any location in 2021 compared to the national average of 77.7% (Asif et al., 2021). Older and more senior broadband internet customers use broadband internet services less frequently than non-senior customers. Non-senior customers are more trusting of internet services because they use services for work and socializing. Many seniors are vulnerable citizens who do not have access to stable Internet or computers or are unable to interact with technology; automation has failed to lead to egalitarian access to public services (Ranchordas & Scarcella, 2021). Price, trust, and technology savviness are impacted by senior budget limitations.

Proliferation of mobile technology has fundamentally transformed communication and access to information. Mobile technology, including tablets and phones has increased due to advances in broadband services, and new technologies, smartphones, laptops, and have grown from 2010 to 2020 among all age groups; by 2017, more households had mobile data plans than wired broadband services (Memon & Memon, 2024). Broadband services have effectively improved doctor-patient care and led to campaigns and programs to improve health or disseminate health information (Asif et

al., 2021). Advances involving broadband services have significantly increased use of mobile technology, transforming communication, healthcare, and information access.

Broadband services affect how the FCC views competition, which involves mergers, acquisitions, and other strategic business decisions (Asif et al., 2021). In addition, the FCC allocates several billion dollars annually through the Universal Service Fund (a low-income support mechanism that assists low-income customers by helping them pay monthly telephone charges and connection charges to initiate telephone calls), and the FCC must define attributes of services it subsidizes (Memon & Memon, 2024). Ideally, subsidies correlate with how much consumers value different features of broadband services (Memon & Memon, 2024). Subsidies assist low-income customers with access to internet services. Broadband users have accessed broadband services via tablets and mobile phones. Successful social networking growth depends on how well organizations attract and create user communities (Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). Business leaders can advertise, create chatbots, and market through Facebook Pages and Messenger; Facebook provides businesses with innovative ways to engage buyers and connect with customers. Broadband customers use social media for advertising, and broadband internet connections have made it easy to connect and advertise. Accessing broadband services on many platforms has made it easier for broadband customers to work, attend school, and use social media.

Social media has increased internet usage. Social networks like Facebook and Instagram are vital, and almost all companies use them; the need for business use has made social media acceptable on business levels. Social media is a term used to describe

the interaction between groups or individuals in which they produce, share, and sometimes exchange ideas, images, and videos over the internet and in virtual communities (B Narasimha Rao, 2022). On the positive side, social networks are an invaluable tool for professionals since young professionals have used such tools in marketing their skills and seeking business opportunities (B Narasimha Rao, 2022). Social networking sites may also be networked efficiently (B Narasimha Rao, 2022). Many business leaders have allowed employees to use professional networks like LinkedIn to communicate with other professionals and for updated company information about company events. Companies advertising through social media have become part of companies' marketing strategies. Broadband company leaders have used social media to their advantage. Broadband company leaders can use the increase in social media as a tool to attract new customers (B Narasimha Rao, 2022).

Customers post frequently to social media sites like Facebook and rely on the speed and accuracy of broadband to deliver timely messages. Through features like Facebook Live and instant news feeds, Facebook has ensured that users are updated with the latest information on their walls (LaMarca, 2021). The speed and value of replies to user posts are crucial to ensuring conversation (Banerjee et al., 2021). Organizational leaders can determine reactions and attitudes to campaign messages and brands from social media conversations (Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). Continuous social media monitoring can signal customer preferences for marketing and enable faster company responses, especially during crises (LaMarca, 2021). Eckardt and Spies (2023) defined *social media* as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allowed the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Users generate content on blogs, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels with photos, community group posts, and videos, allowing good visibility and reach (Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). The creators of videos are often motivated by fame. I seek fame. I want the world to see my video (LaMarca, 2021). Broadband leaders, using research by authors like LaMarca (2021), can craft social media strategies to help their customers with access, visibility, and exposure.

Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing Framework

Trust enhances commitment and aligns with broadband customers' values; therefore, the commitment trust theory illustrates the relationship between broadband customers and broadband company leaders in this project. Trust and commitment are central to the relational mediator's model of relationship marketing. Morgan and Hunt (1994) developed the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, which is the conceptual framework for this proposed research study. The two primary constructs of Morgan and Hunt's theory are relationship commitment and trust. The relationship commitment construct consists of shared values, agreement, mutual benefits, relationship termination costs, and managing the propensity of one party to leave the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The trust construct consists of communication, cooperation, removing uncertainty, functional conflicts, and opportunistic behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Commitment, defined as a desire to maintain a valued relationship, is one of the hallmarks of relationship marketing (John & De Villiers, 2022). Influential business leaders maintain their customer base on shared values, agreement, and mutual trust (John

& De Villiers, 2022). I expected the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing to serve as an effective lens to explore leaders' strategies in the broadband industry. Morgan and Hunt (1994) determined that the commitment-trust approach is a valuable asset to broadband companies' leaders. The conceptual lens framed how I researched the strategies broadband leaders used to gain customers' mutual trust and their desire to maintain a valued relationship.

Broadband company leaders used relationship marketing to improve company profitability. Relationship marketing is crucial for improving a company's profitability, relationships, and loyalty (Abid et al., 2022; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2022). However, customers buy the experience rather than the product (Kim & So, 2022). Customers value the company/brand problem-solving attitude, where firms deliver value in terms of customer services (Abbasi et al., 2021). This relationship is discussed in marketing as customer relationship management (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). The use of theories like relationship marketing can help company leaders improve profitability. Broadband company leaders should use this theory to make their companies more attractive to new customers.

Broadband company leaders can use customer relationship management for best practices for retaining and maintaining their customers. Customer relationship management (CRM) has a new meaning and practices regarding the technological disruption of Industry 4.0 (Abid et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023). The alignment of CRM technologies with CRM practices is recognized and accepted as necessary for business survival and customer growth (Abid et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023).CRM technology-led

shift is the progress of customer-oriented promising and observable business opportunities attached to diverse technologies (Magatef et al., 2023), including artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, and contact customer technologies. Technology has now shifted from buzz to customer routine into the factor of customer trust (Magatef et al., 2023). Broadband leaders use CRM software to gain customer feedback, which leads to better customer service. Broadband company leaders who follow best practice ideas in CRM are better prepared to retain and maintain customers.

Broadband company leaders can find that customer loyalty is often associated with service quality. Broadband leaders that use technology increase and enhance their customers' lives by giving them opportunities to attend school, keep up with their health issues, and shop. CRM technology provides quality customer service that makes sure customers are thoroughly supported (Tsou & Chen, 2021). CRM systems also envelop service organizations' CRM practices to gain customers, meet their requirements and expectations, and establish long-term service relationships (Suoniemi et al., 2021). Despite technology initiatives to assist service firms in reorganizing their CRM practices around customer-centric processes, the firm's CRM technology-enabled activities continue to fall short of customers' expectations, resulting in a 20–30% reduction in a firm's CRM operational efficiency (Suoniemi et al., 2021). One of the critical reasons for this is that CRM technology-related tactics necessitate the collection of structured and unstructured customers to conduct various analyses to conduct multiple investigations to improve the flow of daily-based communication with customers (Suoniemi et al., 2021). Collecting structured and unstructured customers and conducting various analyses assist

broadband/internet leaders in understanding customers, needs, changes, and patterns more clearly. Collecting customer data improves communication between companies and customers. Collecting customer data gives a company better insight into helping customers; collecting customer data also increases reliability and assists with customer loyalty.

Broadband company leaders who use CRM services can manage customer expectations and enhance customer experiences. Digitalization has made customers' lives easier however it has also instilled apprehension about losing personal information while using any digital application (Rather et al., 2021b). The impression of trustworthiness is a significant barrier to customer retention and loyalty for broadband service firms (Rather et al., 2021a). Broadband customers' lives are enhanced because digitalization dispels fears of losing personal information. Digitalization transforms how we communicate and work to revolutionize industries and services; digitalization is a powerful force.

Many customers maintained long-term relationships with broadband companies, not always by choice. Some broadband customers remained with a broadband company out of necessity; and many broadband internet customers are becoming complacent with paying the same amount for services (LaMarca, 2021). As well, many customers do not change companies or platforms for fear of receiving worse services and going to another company where they are less familiar with how to seek and receive assistance when needed (LaMarca, 2021). Trust is the critical basis that might tie the long-term bond between the firm and the customers (Tahir et al., 2024). Broadband company research suggested attempts to address the concerns of the broad organizational CRM and the

impact of CRM system implementation on system quality, to enhance the CRM initiatives (Suoniemi et al., 2021). Rather et al. (2021b) linked the concept of system quality in providing quality services to employee-customer interaction. These interactions are often evaluated based on the service outcomes (Rather et al., 2021b). However, these pedagogies emphasized the trust and commitment that service firms endorse to determine customer loyalty (Rather et al., 2021a). Broadband leaders should use the trust and commitment theory to measure customer retention, but further studies are required to ensure the accuracy of the findings. LaMarca (2021) suggested broadband customers are loyal out of complacency and fear. Broadband customers trust that sticking with the same service is the best they can do. Once customers find a broadband service that works well for them, they may be hesitant to switch due to fear of potential issues with a new provider. Customers become familiar with their current service, including how to troubleshoot common problems and navigate their account settings. Many broadband providers require customers to sign contracts with early termination fees, making it financially unattractive to switch providers.

Technology and Customer Retention

Broadband company leaders must understand the role of technology in building customer relations. Tsou and Chen (2021) looked at the role of technology in previous research in defining the e-customer relationship management perspective. The importance of technology was overlooked in assessing CRM excellence through the lens of trust and commitment.

Conceptualizing constructs to measure customer loyalty is critical because it contributes to the innovative role of trust and commitment in customer relationship management by linking them with technological foundations. The primary goal of this research was to develop a sequential path for measuring CRM loyalty that included technology alignment, CRM trust, and CRM commitment. On the other hand, previous researcher paradigms have emphasized the mediating roles of trust and commitment (Kang & Choi, 2023). Empirically validating a framework through sequential path analysis has included trust and commitment as essential factors of CRM quality.

CRM technology deployments aid managers of broadband companies in improving their customer relationship management practices and quality (trust and commitment). Garrouch and Ghali (2023) conducted similar research and empirically tested the sequential roles of trust and responsibility in enhancing customer loyalty. A high level of CRM practices assisted managers in broadband companies in improving high-quality CRM quality services (trust and commitment). Good CRM quality (trust and commitment) would aid managers in broadband companies in achieving high levels of customer loyalty. The goal is to boost efficiency and productivity while improving the company’s strategic and operational management (Martínez Sánchez & Villoro Armengol, 2021). Intranet technology enables the creation of an internal network using the same technology and presentation tools as the Internet allowing only authorized users access. The use of an intranet will continue to increase rapidly in the future (LaMarca, 2021). Broadband leaders can locate through research that leaders who use CRM technology strategies can build on their customers' trust (Fernando et al., 2023).

Many large companies have internet access to communicate, collaborate, and access data and applications to support their customers. For example, Abid et al. (2022) determined approximately two-thirds of all large companies have or soon have an Intranet. Managers of broadband companies are seeking a better approach to communicating with customers to access consumer records to offer personalized services and make offers due to improvised technological compatibility alignments (Gurler, 2024). Cross-departmental integration of technology will aid companies/brands in gaining customer trust and building long-term sustainable customer relationships (Vanderhout et al., 2023). Developing standard definitions, sharing goals and metrics, lead management, lead nurturing initiatives, lead evaluation, and using streamlined processes are all examples of alignment (Abid et al., 2022). Many of the large companies in the Pennsylvania area have intranet sites where their employees can communicate internally (Tsai et al., 2024). The section highlighted the significance of intranets and cross-departmental technology integration for large companies to enhance internal communication, build customer trust, and offer personalized services.

Company leaders who have correctly designed CRM to meet their needs, benefit from customer loyalty and retention. In fact, company supervisors use technology to monitor and analyze customer interactions throughout the lifecycle to improve relationships, convert leads, nurture sales, and increase customer retention (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). Due to the competitive nature of markets, CRM technology is an enabler of CRM activities and aids in market performance. Some companies' IT managers use CRM technologies to increase short-term earnings or cut costs by

implementing sales automation (POS), which shifts additional duties to the customer side of self-serving (Tsou & Chen, 2021). This approach was previously under consideration by managers of broadband companies since it was determined that correctly designed CRM software can improve broadband companies' relationships with customers and enable growth, retention, and customer satisfaction (Tsou & Chen, 2021). Companies with well-designed CRM systems can enhance customer loyalty and retention by utilizing technology to monitor interactions, improve relationships, and boost market performance, often leveraging sales automation to reduce costs and increase earnings.

Broadband users value Internet speed and the ability to retrieve data faster. The ability to upload and download data at faster speeds appears to the customer base. Householders valued an increase in a data cap from 300 GB to 600 GB. The premium price on high-speed internet is noteworthy since households use only 190 GB of data per month on average as of 2021 (LaMarca, 2021). Households have experienced a decrease in latency from 300–600+ milliseconds (Memon & Memon, 2024). A reduction in latency is approximately equivalent to moving from a satellite to a wired connection of the same bandwidth (Nattamal et al., 2024). Memon & Memon (2024) stated that the results across the two surveys (with and without latency) indicate that failing to account for latency increases measured willingness-to-pay (WTP) for download bandwidth. Broadband users value the ability to get Internet speeds or data capture at the rate they agreed to pay in their contracts.

Customer satisfaction and retention rely on customer's experience with the quality of the services that broadband companies offer, and customer retention is a challenge for

business leaders in the broadband service industry (Di Pietro, 2023). Customer satisfaction is the sum of a customer's experiences with a firm (Ismail, 2022). Business leaders who fail to maintain and improve customer satisfaction rates, experience decreased customer retention levels, lower revenues, and lower profitability (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). As the business environment in the broadband industry becomes increasingly dynamic and competitive, business leaders acknowledge a need to devise strategies to keep customers satisfied and committed to the organization's brand (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). Business leaders increase the value of their customer base by attracting new customers, retaining existing customers, winning back former customers, and efficiently allocating resources among customers to improve customer loyalty and satisfaction (Jami Pour & Karimi, 2023). After reviewing the research on customer satisfaction, improving the customer experience helps in creating customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Rane, 2023). Broadband companies must improve service quality and customer experience to retain customers, as failure to do so results in lower retention, revenues, and profitability, prompting leaders to devise strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Broadband company leaders should research what causes customers to remain loyal to their companies. Otaigbe (2018) called for future research on customer retention in the broadband industry, as well as additional research related to the use of broadband Internet users' customer retention and satisfaction. Parker (2018) noted the need for further research on broadband industry leaders' ability to retain customers. With the background of the problem presented, the focus now shifts to the problem statement. The

search terms are customer relations, broadband companies, customer relations and profit, customer service, and how customer relations affect profit.

Analysis of Contrasting Security Theory

Broadband company leaders using high-speed Internet can impact agriculture, retail, and manufacturing. Aldashev and Batkeyev (2021) determined that unique data from the systematic roll-out of broadband infrastructure in rural areas provides evidence of the impact of high-speed Internet via broadband on three main sectors of the economy: retail, agriculture, and manufacturing. Aldashev and Batkeyev further stated that the instrumental variable model, which relies upon the roll-out timing at the first stage, shows that public broadband access does not foster economic growth but positively affects the retail sector, with no effect on the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Speeds below 10 Mbps are the most significant impact (Deller et al., 2021). Several studies have determined that aging telecommunications infrastructure based on analog technology impedes productivity and competitiveness in transition economies (Fuller, 2023). Access to high-speed Internet via broadband infrastructure has significantly increased economic growth in the last thirty years (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Broadband company leaders using high-speed Internet have increased economic growth.

Broadband company leaders using high-speed Internet from their broadband services provide economic-wide development. Previous literature highlighted that broadband infrastructure might be distinct from other forms of infrastructural investment (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Broadband infrastructure fosters economic growth, as high-speed Internet via broadband may further facilitate economy-wide development by

accelerating the distribution of information, reducing transport and transaction costs, and promoting productivity and competition (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Broadband company leaders can reduce transport and transaction costs and boost productivity and economic-wide development to decrease competition.

Broadband company leaders and their companies must understand the political aspects of the so-called digital divide, since Broadband may also affect the economy by developing new products and processes and adopting new business models (Deller et al., 2021). Because of its high cost, there is a gap in broadband usage between urban and rural areas. Memon and Memon (2024) for instance, discovered evidence of redlining, where broadband carriers avoided areas with high concentrations of poor and minority households. The so-called digital divide has received much attention from policymakers in developed and developing countries (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Neogi (2023) noted that the so-called digital divide is based on pricing and redlining. Politics are a big part of the so-called digital divide.

Broadband company leaders should consider growth in rural. Rural areas lack broadband access because broadband services are unavailable there (Deller et al., 2021). Rong (2022) reported that a 10% increase in broadband penetration boosts GDP growth by 1.21 percentage points in developed countries. More importantly, the effects of broadband are even more vital for low- and middle-income countries – about 1.38 percentage points (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Deller et al. (2021) determined that studies show the positive impact of broadband on growth. Further research on broadband growth is still needed, especially in developing countries. Broadband may not necessarily

produce the desired effect without investment in complementary sectors, such as education or health (Helsper, 2021). Broadband company leaders must understand that putting broadband in rural areas will not get the desired effect without investment in education and healthcare.

Aldashev and Batkeyev (2021) determined that broadband services are hard to disentangle because gathering information is complex since most of existing studies used a cross-country variation. Access and difficulty gathering information, especially in rural parts of developing countries, contributed to this gap in literature (Deller et al., 2021). The impact of broadband is hard to disentangle from other factors because of endogenous economic or social factors (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Broadband company leaders should determine the economic and social factors that affect the importance of providing broadband to rural areas.

A question for broadband leaders about economic growth is whether changing broadband infrastructure leads to economic growth. Broadband company leaders will find scant evidence that links economic growth to broadband infrastructure. Deller et al. (2021) stated that there is scant systematic evidence relating broadband infrastructure to economic growth in developing countries, and more importantly, they need to examine its effect in rural areas. However, broadband could be a more significant source of productivity in rural areas (Deller et al., 2021). First, broadband may contribute to the formation of human capital (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Broadband company leaders have found that investing in broadband infrastructure in rural areas does not accurately contribute to human capital formation.

Customers in rural areas can use broadband services to access online courses they traditionally would have to attend in person. Access to information and various training courses online may help individuals in remote areas far from traditional schools or training centers acquire new skills (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). In that case, broadband infrastructure might have a more significant effect in rural areas, given relatively low penetration levels. Consumers might not fully utilize this technology's benefits because of other issues prevalent in developing regions, such as poor governance, lack of capital, and low skill levels (Deller et al., 2021). Customers in rural areas cannot take advantage of some of the benefits of broadband because of other factors such as lack of capital, poor governance, etc.

In recent years, expanding and enhancing broadband infrastructure is now a key driver of economic growth and development. Investing in broadband services in the Pennsylvania area has been very successful for companies like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T (Forde, 2024). Broadband is an investment for many countries. The allocation of investment funds to sector-specific infrastructure is an important policy issue for any country (Aldashev & Batkeyev, 2021). Deller et al. (2021) analyzed the relationship between the roll-out of broadband infrastructure and the regional product in rural areas of Kazakhstan by focusing on three major sectors of the economy: agriculture, retail, and manufacturing. Aldashev and Batkeyev (2021) exploited a unique dataset on program roll-out across the villages in Kazakhstan over ten years from 2006 to 2016, combined with the data from the Kazakh Statistical Agency, to show the impact of broadband access on three major sectors of the economy. Deller et al.'s (2021) baseline results

positively affected the retail industry, with no effect on manufacturing output and composite products in the agricultural sector. Broadband companies and leaders in the Pennsylvania area must fully understand the effects of investing in relationship management on the economy regarding assessing the growth of broadband infrastructure.

Broadband customers find broadband access stimulates economic development. Economic development in rural areas hinges on access to broadband. Sufficient access to broadband and the utilization of broadband is a growing concern for rural economic development (Schmit & Severson, 2021). Service prices must increase by 75%–131%, depending on grant restrictions relative to existing market prices for new broadband cooperatives to become economically feasible (Schmit & Severson, 2021). The restriction that providers offer a minimum speed at a maximum price result in high subsidization by high-speed to low-speed members to support the business (Schmit & Severson, 2021). Restrictions on broadband services can reduce business growth in rural areas. Restrictions on broadband decrease opportunities for economic development.

Customer Service

Restoring broadband service or reducing service disruption is crucial for customers, businesses, home users, and students. Reducing service disruption is an essential part of customer retention. Satisfaction with service recovery is the magnitude to which the service provider's service recovery efforts meet or surpass customers' expectations and reduce their dissatisfaction after a service failure (Zaki, 2021). Service recovery signifies customer satisfaction with the service provider's recovery efforts, including the perception of interaction and solution (Liu, 2022). The effectiveness or

ineffectiveness of service recovery after a service failure still significantly impacts customers' satisfaction with the service (Liu, 2022). When the service recovery efforts from the service provider are equitable to the customer's loss, they be satisfied with the service recovery (Liu, 2022). Moreover, the more effectively the losses the service provider recovers, the more satisfaction the service recovery process generates (LaMarca, 2021).). Service providers alleviate customers' feelings of betrayal and their intentions with satisfactory service (Liu, 2022). Any business can obtain a competitive advantage in a highly competitive environment to achieve customer satisfaction (LaMarca, 2021). Broadband company leaders must reduce service disruption downtime. Customer retention is dependent upon reliable services. Leaders of broadband companies' efforts of the downed services are essential to retaining customer confidence. Leaders of broadband companies' efforts to compensate, apologize, and explain during recovery efforts are crucial to retain customer satisfaction.

Current Status

There is a long-standing broadband service reach and a quality gap between metropolitan and rural areas. The rural areas in the greater Philadelphia region needed to be updated and wired correctly. The national Federal Communications Commission standard for broadband service as of 2020 is 25 Mbps download and three Mbps upload speed (Sanchez-Arias et al., 2023). Approximately 93.5% of Americans have access to fixed broadband at those speeds (Sanchez-Arias et al., 2023). Census statistics confirm that individuals 65 and older use broadband services less frequently: 63.1% of that group used the Internet at any location in 2018 compared to a national average of 77.7%

(Sanchez-Arias et al., 2023). Mobile technology use, such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets, generally grew in the 2010-2020 decade among all age groups, and by 2017 more households had mobile data plans than had wired broadband services (Sanchez-Arias et al., 2023). Broadband companies' improvements in their services can effectively improve customer experiences, businesses, and overall life in both the rural and urban areas.

Relevance of Literature

This qualitative pragmatic study explored the strategies some broadband industry leaders use to retain customers. The targeted population was leaders of broadband companies in Pennsylvania who have implemented successful strategies to retain customers. The implications for positive social change include the potential for broadband industry leaders to decrease unemployment, increase economic development in local communities, and improve the living conditions of the residents. Business leaders who increase profitability through improved customer retention contribute to society by improving employment rates, increasing local economic stability, and reducing local poverty rates (Bates, 2022). Broadband business leaders, through their strategies, create positive change, decrease unemployment, and increase economic development.

Transition

In Section 2, I reviewed the professional and academic literature and discussed the application of the literature to the applied business problem. In Section 3, I included discussions on project ethics, the nature of the project, data collection and analysis activities, and reliability and validity. In Section 4, I discussed the findings and the implications for business practice, social change, and further research.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Sovereignty of individual researchers hinges on their right and freedom to decide on investigation topics, objectives, methods, and execution without external influence (Nagai et al., 2022). My role as a researcher involved data collection, establishing relationships with participants, ensuring ethical behavior, and following Belmont Report protocols. I also mitigated biases involving viewing data personally and my experiences.

Project Ethics

As the project practitioner, I collected unbiased participant information. My relationship with the topic is rooted in my career experience. I have worked in the business and information technology industry for 40 years. I have extensive customer service experience and own a technology company, with which I have partnered with Verizon and Comcast. I have successfully worked with many people in different industries.

The Belmont Report outlines basic morals involving respect for persons. Researchers are required to treat participants as autonomous agents, and they are entitled to protection (Nagai et al., 2022). The principle of respect for people thus involves acknowledging autonomy and protecting those with diminished autonomy (Nagai et al., (2022). This involves respecting their decisions, protecting them from harm, and ensuring their wellbeing (Nagai et al., 2022).

As a researcher, I used integrity and care when presenting my research objectively and reasonably. Objectivity and responsibility are important considerations when doing research. I ensured the research was done responsibly, with integrity, care, and

objectivity. My research included appropriate safeguards to protect participants. I conducted interviews via Zoom as a safeguard to keep their identities anonymous. Participants signed consent forms, which they received via email. This detailed my expectations, expectations for participants, and instructions regarding how to withdraw from the study. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were permitted to withdraw without repercussions via email.

I offered potential participants no compensation or incentives. Benefits of participating in this study were that participants would understand their customers better, further the industry, and gain new skills to retain and grow their businesses. I used encryption on my project files and saved data and information in a private virtual cloud account to which only I have access, to secure data for 5 years after completion of the study. After 5 years, I will incinerate papers and erase all electronic files. I ensured these methods were adequate to protect participants by submitting study methods to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval and complying with all IRB guidelines. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study was 03-10-25-0527792.

Nature of the Project

I used the qualitative method to address my research question. Qualitative research involves exploring, describing, and understanding contextual phenomena (Abhari & McGuckin, 2023). This approach was appropriate for my study since I sought to explore, explain, and understand a phenomenon within a specific setting. I used the qualitative methodology to understand subjective and socially-constructed meanings. I used a pragmatic inquiry focusing on individual decision-maker approaches to addressing

a real-world problem. Qualitative pragmatic investigations are used in business research to identify and interpret strategies, develop potential best practices, and analyze complex phenomena within trans organizational contexts (Foster, 2023). This approach was appropriate for my study because I aimed to address intricacies of a phenomenon within its unique context. By exploring, explaining, and understanding the phenomenon in a specific setting, I gathered nuanced insights and ensured my findings reflected participants lived experiences.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The population for this study was 10 broadband leaders in Pennsylvania who implemented successful strategies and sustained their operations for 3 years. All participants were broadband company leaders who were located in Philadelphia and had 3 years of broadband company experience and strategies to retain customers and generate new revenue streams.

I used purposive sampling to select 10 to 12 participants from the targeted population. Purposive sampling involves strategically selecting participants who can provide data that fit research question parameters, and smaller samples facilitate requisite particularization of contextual phenomena as compared to than larger ones (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). I ensured data saturation to finalize my sample size by collecting data from participants iteratively through semistructured interviews until no new themes were identified. Saturation is where issues and insights begin to repeat, making further collection redundant (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). I achieved data saturation after interviewing 10 IT managers.

My strategies to gain access to participants involved using professional associations and social connections. I collected data directly from broadband company leaders in the Philadelphia region who have operated for 3 years or more. I also used word of mouth to gain access to participants.

I shared information about the research project, explaining the process for informed consent and helping participants prepare for interviews by referring to the interview protocol. Establishing a working relationship with participants is critical for continuing cognitive access to data source. After initial contact with participants, I followed up with them preferably face-to-face to develop rapport and mutual orientation. These strategies helped build legitimacy and improve participants' understanding of the process.

Data Collection Activities

As the researcher, I systematically gathered suitable data to address my study's research question. Therefore, I was the primary data collection instrument in my study. Researchers must coordinate all aspects of their research and collect data appropriately to find answers to their research questions (Akella et al., 2023; Mwita, 2022). My data collection process involved conducting semistructured interviews. Qualitative researchers commonly use semistructured interviews to obtain rich and thick data to suit the exploratory nature of their research aims (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). This was an appropriate tool for my study in order to ensure data capture while allowing participants to bring their personalities and perspectives to discussions. In qualitative research, semistructured interviews are beneficial because they are informal, involve using open-

ended questions, and facilitate spontaneous follow-up questions (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

When conducting my semistructured interviews, I ensured my approach was consistent with the multiple participants to mitigate bias, and support validity and reliability. Collecting data is complex and may jeopardize an entire research study if not done well. Using interview protocols are indispensable in that regard, specifically to effectively explore phenomena in real-world situations (Nosek et al., 2022). My interview protocol included scripted opening statements, an ordered list of interview questions and prompts for probing, and interview-closing comments. I followed clear, detailed procedural steps when conducting the semistructured participant interviews. The interview protocol which describes the interview questions to collect data for my study is explained in Appendix B. I shared and discussed the protocol with each participant in my study.

To enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection process I used member checking. Member checking is a technique used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Kakar et al., 2023). I shared their interview question responses, such as themes or my interpretations of their responses, with the participants who provided the responses to my semistructured interview questions. Participants reviewed my interpretations of their interview findings and provided feedback on their accuracy and relevance. I refined their interpretations to reflect participants' perspectives better. Member checking ensured that the research

findings resonate with participants lived experiences and helped to mitigate researcher bias (Singh et al., 2021).

Triangulation involves using multiple methods, data sources, theories, or investigators to study a single phenomenon (Singh et al., 2021). This approach enhanced the validity and credibility of my research findings. I used methodological triangulation, which involved using different methodologies to approach the same research question. An example of methodological triangulation is how I cross-verified information, identified any discrepancies, so that I had a more comprehensive understanding of data I gathered in this study. Qualitative researchers can enhance validity and reliability using member-checking, mechanical recording, rich data (verbatim transcripts), triangulation, and reflexivity (Singh et al., 2021). These tools and methods can give readers confidence or trust in the study's conclusions and findings.

Interview Questions

I used semistructured interviews to collect the data. The interview questions included the following:

1. What strategies do you use to retain customers?
2. What strategy do you consider the most effective in retaining customers?
3. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you use to retain customers?
4. What barriers did you experience in implementing strategies to retain customers?
5. How did you overcome the critical barriers in implementing strategies for customer retention?

6. How do you communicate and seek to implement your strategies through your employees involved with customer retention?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Qualitative researchers can use several sources to collect data to compile a project database. The qualitative researcher can use various data collection techniques, including using several sources of evidence, generating a pragmatic study database, keeping a source of evidence, and being cautious when using data from electronic sources (Abhari & McGuckin, 2023; Kouhizadeh et al., 2021). The primary data collection instrument I used was a semistructured interview. Semistructured interviews are in-depth interviews in which participants must answer predefined open-ended questions (Abhari & McGuckin, 2023; Hutama et al., 2021; Juvonen et al., 2024). Abhari and McGuckin (2023) noted that the semistructured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions to the researcher and reliable and comparable qualitative data. De Paoli (2023) believed that by using semistructured interviews, researchers could effectively address the research question during the interview and thereby collect data. Researchers could use semistructured interviews to allow the participants to express their opinions on their own terms (Abhari & McGuckin, 2023; Becker & Schad, 2022; Hutama et al., 2021; Kouhizadeh et al., 2021). I used semistructured interviews and an interview protocol to ask the participants the same questions while building rapport. A researcher can use techniques such as providing questions to create a context for their study.

I used probing questions to establish context in this project. Becker and Schad (2022) noted that researchers could use a probing question to employ direct questioning

and establish a context for the study. Kouhizadeh et al. (2021) also shared that qualitative researchers can use initial probing questions to enhance credibility and build rapport with the participants. In addition to probing questions, the researcher should use targeted questions to have the participants' responses on the searched topic (Becker & Schad, 2022; Juvonen et al., 2024). Braun and Clarke (2022) noted that through semistructured interviews, the researcher could formulate targeted follow-up questions to explore the respondent's response to (a) obtaining more details and information, (b) asking for elucidating examples, and (c) clarifying concepts and themes. In addition to using semistructured interview questions, I took notes and used an audio recording. Researchers can use semistructured interviews to gather high-quality data from the participants (Hardey, 2022). Abhari and McGuckin (2023) stated that researchers could use semistructured interviews to build a good relationship with the participants and gain a more in-depth insight into specific answers. De Paoli (2023) suggested that researchers should use semistructured interviews to improve the quality of the validity of participants' responses. I used semistructured interview questions and an interview protocol to engage with the participants (Appendices A and B) and collect reliable and comparable data.

In conducting this project, maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and their affiliations is paramount to ensure the integrity and privacy of the research. I sought not to disclose any information about the participants' names and company affiliations to protect their anonymity and confidentiality in this study. Instead, I used codes such as PMS1, PMS2, PMT3, PMT4, and PMT5 to identify each participant and their firm's name. Researchers must ensure that data collected from participants is

accurate and reliable. Researchers should ensure the accuracy of the data collected from participants (Abhari & McGuckin, 2023; Kouhizadeh et al., 2021). Motulsky (2021) suggested that using member checking will enhance the credibility of the results. Abhari and McGuckin (2023) also indicated that the researcher should return the data to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experience. I used member checking to allow the participants to comment and correct the transcribed interview for validation.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Boyd (2023) noted that reliability is the degree to which the result of a measurement, calculation, or specification is accurate. Reliability in a study is a crucial element in research findings, since it enables a researcher to demonstrate the consistency and accuracy of an instrument's measurements (Boyd, 2023). The researcher can use reliability as a measurement of their findings. Reliability may confirm or deny the researcher's conclusions (Boyd, 2023). I ensured that the research in my project was reliable by using member checking. Member checking is a technique that involves returning my interpreted interview question responses to the participants to confirm or clarify the data. Member checking can include reviewing transcripts, sharing findings, or sharing draft reports. Sharing my interpretations of the interviews with each participant ensured the data accurately reflected the spirit and intent of the participant's responses to the semistructured interview questions.

Validity

Research that is not valid serves no purpose in advancing future research. Validity, as noted by Cheung et al. (2023), is how well the results among the study participants represent findings from similar research data. A test is valid for measuring an attribute if (a) the attribute exists, and (b) variations in the attribute causally produce variation in the measurement outcomes (Cheung et al., 2023). Validity identifies how the student will ensure credibility (i.e., member checking of the data interpretation, participant transcript review, triangulation, etc.). Validity in research refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings (Cheung et al., 2023). Validity ensures that the results genuinely reflect the phenomenon studied. Several types of validity exist, including internal validity, which assesses if the study's design and execution accurately support the conclusion, and external validity, which evaluates if the research generalizes findings to other contexts and populations (Cheung et al., 2023). Incorporating participants' responses regarding customer engagement, feedback, and communication practices directly strengthened internal and external validity. Customer engagement emerged as a critical theme through participants' descriptions of meaningful interactions, reinforcing the study's findings' authenticity and relevance to real-world customer relationship dynamics. I used feedback gathered from customers who provided insightful, organic data to refine service offerings, grounding the study's outcomes in experiential truth and improving the study's alignment with actual customer expectations.

The emphasis on customer involvement at every level empowered the participants to co-create value, which ensured the findings reflected not only top-down strategies but

also bottom-up experiences, thus enhancing construct validity. Accurate performance metrics, informed by data-driven insights shared by participants, enabled triangulation of qualitative responses with quantitative outcomes, bolstering internal validity through methodological rigor. Clear and empathetic communication, as described by participants, helped establish credibility and trustworthiness in the research process, strengthening the relational validity of the findings. Finally, participants acknowledged top-level leadership support as a driving force behind customer-first strategies, reinforcing the influence of organizational culture on customer experience and expanding the scope of external validity to similar corporate environments. Altogether, these participant-driven elements ensured that the research findings were meaningful and transferable, aligning closely with customer-centric organizations' lived realities and strategic frameworks.

Confirmability pertains to the objectivity of the research (Nosek et al., 2022). It measures the extent to which others can corroborate or confirm the results. Confirmability involves maintaining a clear audit trail of the data collection and analysis processes, ensuring that the respondents shape the findings and not researcher bias or subjectivity. I ensured confirmability following the interviews with the 10 candidates; detailed records of each interview were maintained, including verbatim transcripts, reflective notes, and coding decisions. The interview information was collected, systematically organized, and stored to allow for external audits and independent verification of the analytical process. Patterns and emerging themes were cross-checked against the original data to ensure alignment with participants' responses. This rigorous

documentation process helps reinforce the transparency of the study and supports the credibility of the conclusions drawn from the participants' input.

Validity identifies how the student will ensure data saturation (Nosek et al., 2022). Data saturation was reached by conducting a thorough literature review. By understanding the existing knowledge, I identified gaps and ensured the study covered unexplored areas. Utilizing diverse data collection methods and various data collection techniques (e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations) can help capture comprehensive information. I implemented a recursive data collection and analysis process, continually reviewing emerging themes until no new information surfaced. Participant responses were cross-compared and triangulated across multiple sources to confirm consistency and depth. I maintained detailed field notes and reflective memos throughout the research process, which enhanced my ability to detect data redundancy. This rigorous and iterative approach strengthened the project's validity by demonstrating that I repeated and deeply embedded the information from my findings in the collected data.

I sampled diverse participants. Ensuring a diverse participant pool can provide varied perspectives, which may reduce the risk of reaching saturation prematurely. Regularly reviewing and frequently analyzing data during the collection process allows researchers to identify saturation early and adjust their methods if needed (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Using triangulation and employing multiple sources or methods to cross-verify data can enhance the depth and breadth of the research, contributing to saturation and utilizing software.

Validity supports the claims and decisions with multiple scholarly, peer-reviewed, or seminal sources (Nosek et al., 2022). This concept diverges from the current validity theory in several respects. Researchers rely on credible participants in qualitative studies. Credibility in this context refers to the believability of some information and its source (Magatef et al. 2023). Credibility is a multifaceted concept with two primary dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. I used thorough research and ensured that I based my work on comprehensive and current research. I used reputable sources and cross-checked information. I described my research methods so others can understand and replicate my work. I submitted my work to peer-reviewed journals. Feedback from other experts helped validate your findings. I strived for objectivity in your research. I properly cited all sources. Recognizing the contributions of others fosters trust and integrity. I prioritized remaining informed about the latest advancements in your area of expertise by attending conferences, reading scholarly journals, and actively connecting with fellow researchers.

Secondary factors affect credibility perceptions, including source attractiveness and dynamism (Zhai et al., 2023). The credibility of a source or message is a receiver-based judgment that involves objective assessments of information quality or accuracy and subjective perceptions of the source's trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Huang & Liu, 2021). If researchers select candidates with trustworthy expertise in their fields of work, it lends credibility and reliability to the research created.

I implemented a rigorous vetting process that evaluates the depth of expertise and the relevance of the candidate’s background to the research topic. The process involved

reviewing their academic qualifications, professional track record, and contributions to peer-reviewed publications or projects within their domain. By cross-referencing recommendations, verifying credentials, and assessing prior work, I identified individuals whose experience aligns precisely with the research objectives. If researchers select candidates with trustworthy expertise in their fields of work, it lends credibility and reliability to the research created.

Transition and Summary

In this project, I explored strategies used by broadband IT managers to retain customers in a highly competitive industry. In Section 3, I addressed assumptions and limitations, explained the significance of the project, and reviewed the reliability and validity of the proposed project. In Section 4, I discussed the findings and the implications for business practice, social change, and further research, and ended with a conclusion.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

In this qualitative project, I aimed to understand how IT managers of broadband companies used strategies to retain customers and gain profit. To accomplish this, I interviewed IT managers to understand their strategies for retaining customers and returning profit to their organizations.

In this section, I reported results of this qualitative project. This included the project setting in which data were collected, demographics and characteristics of participants, and data collection and analysis. Further, the section concludes with evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary.

The overarching research question was: What strategies do IT managers in cable companies use to retain customers? Six key themes emerged from research: customer engagement, which fosters relationships through meaningful interactions, customer feedback, which involves offering insights to enhance services and offerings customer involvement empowering customers to contribute to decision-making processes, accurate metrics enabling performance tracking through data-driven insights, clear and empathetic communication, ensuring timely and effective exchanges with customers, and top-level leadership.

Customer engagement is the foundation of long-term success. Businesses that actively cultivate customer relationships foster trust, loyalty, and advocacy. Engagement requires companies to understand their audience, offer personalized experiences, and create opportunities for meaningful interaction. Whether through digital communication,

tailored promotions, or proactive outreach, organizations prioritizing engagement ensure their customers feel valued and heard.

Customer feedback is a crucial element of this engagement. Successful companies listen to their customers through surveys, reviews, and direct communication, using these inputs to enhance their offerings. More importantly, they act on feedback by making informed adjustments and innovations that address customer needs. Businesses strengthen their credibility and reinforce their commitment to continuous improvement by demonstrating responsiveness.

Involving customers at every level further deepens this connection. Rather than passively delivering products and services, organizations can empower their customers by inviting them into the process via beta testing, advisory panels, or loyalty programs that reward engagement. This approach transforms customers from buyers into stakeholders, fostering a sense of inclusion and partnership. When customers feel like their input genuinely impacts business decisions, they become enthusiastic advocates for brands.

Keeping accurate metrics is essential for measuring effectiveness of engagement and feedback strategies. To assess their impacts, businesses must track key performance indicators (KPIs) such as retention rates, satisfaction scores, and responsiveness metrics. Data-driven decision-making ensures companies can adapt their approaches based on factual insights rather than assumptions. By leveraging analytics and tracking customer interactions, organizational leaders better understand what resonates with their audience, leading to more targeted strategies and improved experiences.

Companies must prioritize transparency, responsiveness, and empathy during platform interactions. Whether through customer support, marketing messaging, or everyday interactions, businesses that master communication cultivate trust and reliability. Timely responses, proactive updates, and genuine conversations enhance customer relationships, ensuring customers feel valued rather than overlooked.

Executives who champion customer-focused initiatives set the tone for organizations. When leadership prioritizes engagement, feedback, and accurate metrics, these values foster business-wide commitments to excellence. A strong customer-first mindset is necessary to ensure employees align their efforts with company's visions for exceptional service and satisfaction. This ensures that businesses remains adaptable, customer-focused, and poised for sustainable growth.

Interviews with participants confirmed removing barriers involving time, effort, and expenses was critical in terms of retaining customer bases. Relationship commitment involves shared values, agreement, mutual benefits, termination costs, and the propensity of one party to leave relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing served as an effective lens to explore leaders' strategies in the broadband industry.

Broadband company leaders use relationship marketing to improve company profitability, which is crucial for improving relationships and loyalty (Abid et al., 2022; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2022)

Communications strategies were effective for companies and assisted in retaining customers (see Table 1).

. Leadership buy-in also emerged as a pivotal factor; when executives champion digital transformation efforts, it sets a tone of commitment throughout organizations. Providing adequate training for employees ensures staff are technically equipped and customer-centric in terms of their approaches.

Table 1

Participant Responses to Customers

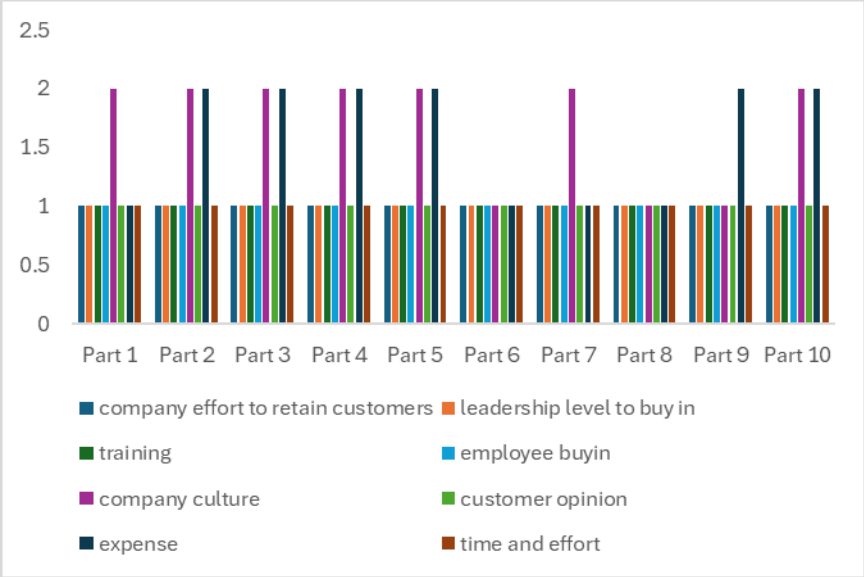
Participant responses	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8	Part 9	Part 10
company effort to retain customers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
leadership level to buy in	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
training	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
employee buyin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
company culture	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
customer opinion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
expense	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
time and effort	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
totals	9	10	10	10	10	8	9	8	9	10

1 for yes 2 for no
Part = Particpiant

Moreover, fostering employee buy-in is crucial to successfully implementing service-oriented technologies and processes. IT managers recognize even the most sophisticated tools may be insufficient without support from staff on the ground. Addressing company culture and customer opinion enables managers to align IT strategies with internal values and external expectations. Finally, overcoming concerns related to expense and time and effort remains essential; managers often look for scalable and efficient solutions that can deliver meaningful results without overextending resources (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Summary of Participants



All 10 participants agreed that several key factors posed significant barriers to customer retention and long-term profitability. Chief among them were the company's efforts to retain customers, leadership-level buy-in, adequate training, employee engagement, alignment in company culture, and attentiveness to customer opinion. Identifying these elements is critical to overcoming and driving sustainable growth. Notably, expense and company culture emerged as the most commonly cited and verified barriers, highlighting the need for a cohesive organizational mindset and judicious resource allocation to support retention strategies effectively.

Table 2 and Figure 2 serve as compelling evidence that initiatives such as Put customer first, change culture, coaching, training, build a connection, and cross-functional standups- are not merely aspirational ideals—they are strategic imperatives for customer retention. The data reveals a consistent alignment among IT managers who

prioritize these elements, showing higher satisfaction scores, reduced churn rates, or more positive client feedback where these practices are embedded in daily operations.

Table 2

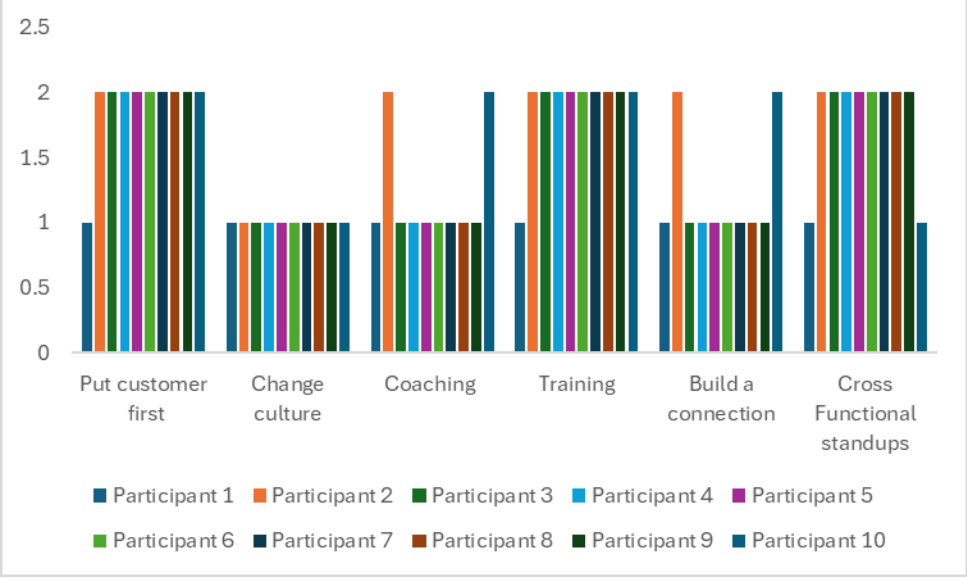
Summary of Critical Barriers

Paricpants responses	Put customer first	Change culture	Coaching	Training	Build a connection	Cross Functional standups
Participant 1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Participant 3	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 4	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 5	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 6	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 7	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 8	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 9	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participant 10	2	1	2	2	2	1
Total	19	10	12	19	12	18

1 for yes 2 for no

Figure 1

Barriers for IT Managers to Overcome



For example, a strong emphasis on putting the customer first correlates with improved response times and resolution rates, directly contributing to customer loyalty. Cultural change and coaching appear repeatedly as foundational efforts for shifting internal mindsets toward customer-centric behaviors. Meanwhile, training ensures teams have the latest skills and tools to meet evolving client expectations.

Perhaps most notably, building a connection and fostering cross-functional standups highlight service delivery's human and collaborative sides—two areas that often determine whether a customer feels truly understood and supported. Altogether, the table and chart do not just show isolated practices; they paint a broader picture of what successful customer retention looks like in practice.

In a recent feedback session with 10 dedicated volunteers, nine out of ten unanimously agreed that prioritizing the customer, embracing cultural change, and investing in coaching and training are pivotal for effective communication. They emphasized that building strong connections and facilitating cross-functional standups streamlines internal collaboration and creates a unified front when engaging with customers. The customer service communication belief underscores a powerful insight: These combined practices are not just strategies but essential ingredients in fostering trust and ultimately driving customer retention. When an organization lives these values, success is not just possible but sustainable.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The principles of customer engagement, feedback, inclusion, accurate metrics, communication, and leadership play a crucial role in shaping modern business strategies.

Organizations prioritizing these elements foster stronger relationships, improve efficiency, and drive sustainable growth. Each theme contributes significantly to improved business outcomes through a structured approach to customer-centric operations.

Theme 1: Customer Engagement and Business Growth

Engaged customers are likelier to remain loyal, advocate for a brand, and contribute to its long-term success. My research suggests that companies with high levels of engagement experience increased retention rates and higher customer value. Businesses prioritizing engagement through personalized experiences, proactive outreach, or digital interaction create an emotional connection that fosters trust and repeat business (Fatorachian, et al., 2025). This principle is especially crucial in industries where customer relationships directly impact revenue, such as retail, hospitality, and financial services.

Theme 2: Customer Feedback as a Driver of Innovation

Customer feedback provides businesses with valuable insights that drive innovation and adaptation. Companies that actively solicit feedback through surveys, focus groups, and social media interactions position themselves to make informed decisions that align with customer expectations (Seyfi, et al., 2024). Integrating feedback mechanisms into business strategy ensures continuous improvement, minimizing the risk of outdated offerings and misaligned services. Businesses that neglect this principle often struggle with stagnant growth and customer dissatisfaction.

Theme 3: Involving Customers to Build Brand Advocacy

Empowering customers as stakeholders in business operations deepens engagement and fosters brand loyalty. Involving customers in product development, service improvements, and decision-making processes ensures that their voices are acknowledged and acted upon (Fatorachian, et al., 2025). This participation transformed customers from passive consumers to active contributors, resulting in better alignment between business offerings and market demands. It also cultivates a sense of ownership, where customers feel invested in a brand's success, leading to organic advocacy and expansion.

Theme 4: Keeping Accurate Metrics for Strategic Decision-Making

Data-driven decision-making is essential for maintaining business efficiency. Metrics related to engagement levels, customer satisfaction, retention rates, and service response times provide businesses with actionable insights (Gkikas n & Theodoridis 2024).. Without accurate measurement systems, companies risk misallocating resources, overlooking key opportunities, and failing to adapt to changing market conditions. Businesses that invest in analytics platforms and real-time data processing enhance their ability to refine strategies and maintain competitive advantages.

Theme 5: Communication as the Cornerstone of Customer Trust

Effective communication strengthens relationships, prevents misunderstandings, and fosters transparency. Businesses prioritizing clear and timely communication build trust, mitigate potential conflicts, and improve customer experience (Aldboush & Ferdous 2023). This theme is particularly crucial in sectors where customer expectations for

responsiveness are high, such as healthcare, e-commerce, and financial services. Strong communication strategies ensure that customers feel heard, valued, and confident in their interactions with the company.

Theme 6: Leadership from the Top Level to Ensure Organizational Alignment

Executive leadership is foundational in embedding customer-centric values into a company's culture. Leaders who advocate for engagement, feedback-driven decision-making, and transparency set the tone for company-wide adoption. Businesses where leadership prioritizes customer experience tend to exhibit stronger employee engagement, higher customer satisfaction, and greater adaptability to market changes (Gankhuyag et al., 2025). Leadership alignment is essential for ensuring that customer-first initiatives are tactical efforts and integrated core principles.

Filling Gaps in Business Understanding and Practice

The research on these customer-centric themes addresses key gaps in traditional business models that have historically focused on transactional efficiency rather than relationship-building. By shifting focus toward engagement, feedback, and leadership, businesses can mitigate weaknesses such as poor customer retention, lack of adaptability, and inefficient decision-making. This research highlights the importance of aligning business operations with evolving customer expectations, ensuring long-term relevance and competitiveness.

Recommendations for Business Leaders

Leaders should take the following concrete steps to improve business outcomes while ensuring effective implementation and measurable progress. Prioritizing customer

engagement initiatives requires a structured approach to evaluate their impact. Businesses should establish key performance indicators (KPIs) such as customer retention rates, engagement levels on digital platforms, and satisfaction scores from loyalty program participants. Regular audits of community forum activity and AI-driven customer service interactions help assess effectiveness and highlight areas for improvement. Additionally, periodic surveys and focus groups can provide valuable insights into customer perceptions of engagement efforts.

Developing robust feedback mechanisms is essential for maintaining responsiveness to consumer needs. Companies should implement a systematic process to collect and analyze customer feedback across multiple channels. Tracking metrics such as survey response rates, net promoter scores (NPS), and review sentiment analysis ensures that feedback trends inform decision-making. Business leaders should create a structured feedback loop where insights directly influence product development, service enhancements, and customer experience optimization.

Empowering customers through collaborative involvement fosters trust and innovation. Businesses can track the success of customer participation initiatives by monitoring beta-testing engagement levels, advisory panel feedback incorporation rates, and product iteration changes based on direct customer input. Measuring the influence of customer-driven insights on final product versions ensures accountability in collaborative strategies. Additionally, businesses should maintain a transparent reporting system showcasing how customer contributions shape decision-making.

Utilizing data analytics for accurate metrics and performance tracking is critical for sustaining business growth. Organizations should integrate advanced analytics platforms to monitor customer relationship management (CRM) data, tracking engagement trends, purchase patterns, and service efficiency. Establishing benchmark comparisons and predictive analytics models helps refine strategic approaches and proactively address emerging market shifts. Businesses should schedule routine reviews of data insights to ensure decisions remain aligned with evolving customer needs.

Enhancing communication standards requires consistency and adaptability. Companies should implement metrics such as customer response times, resolution efficiency, and sentiment analysis across communication platforms. Training programs should undergo regular evaluation based on employee performance, customer feedback, and case study analysis. Tracking engagement across automated communication tools ensures personalization does not compromise authenticity, maintaining the balance between efficiency and meaningful interactions.

Strengthening executive leadership's commitment to customer-centric strategies demands continuous assessment. Organizational leaders should develop a leadership dashboard with measurable indicators such as integrating customer-first policies into strategic plans, the frequency of executive engagement in direct customer interactions, and the tangible impact of leadership-driven initiatives. Leaders should conduct periodic reviews of customer-centric outcomes and ensure alignment with overarching corporate objectives.

Systematic tracking and measuring results require a structured approach that ensures businesses can evaluate the effectiveness of customer-focused strategies, refine processes, and drive continuous improvements. This process involves defining clear metrics, establishing monitoring systems, leveraging analytical tools, and implementing feedback loops for sustained progress.

First, business leaders must define relevant metrics that align with their strategic objectives. These could include customer satisfaction scores, retention rates, net promoter scores (NPS), engagement metrics, conversion rates, and responsiveness in customer interactions. Setting measurable benchmarks enables organizations to track progress effectively and identify trends over time.

After establishing metrics, business leaders should use robust monitoring systems to collect and analyze data consistently. Establishing metrics involves integrating customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, artificial intelligence-driven analytics, and automated tracking tools to ensure real-time insights into customer behaviors, preferences, and feedback patterns. Businesses should also implement structured reporting frameworks that allow teams to review progress regularly.

Leveraging analytical tools is essential for making data-driven decisions. Organizations can use predictive analytics to forecast customer trends, sentiment analysis to gauge customer perceptions, and performance dashboards to visualize key indicators. Machine learning algorithms can also help identify patterns in customer interactions, enabling businesses to optimize engagement strategies and product offerings accordingly.

Feedback loops play a crucial role in refining customer-centric initiatives. Businesses should establish structured mechanisms to collect customer insights, analyze responses, and implement necessary adjustments. Structure mechanisms include periodic customer surveys, social listening tools to monitor discussions across digital platforms, and review analysis to capture sentiment trends. Ensuring that feedback is collected and actively incorporated into decision-making strengthens customer trust and organizational agility.

To ensure accountability, business leaders should develop detailed assessment frameworks that track the implementation of customer-centered strategies. These frameworks should outline milestones, key action steps, responsible personnel, and evaluation timelines. Quarterly or annual performance reviews and comparative analyses can give organizations a holistic view of their progress and areas requiring improvement.

A structured approach to tracking implementation and measuring results ensures businesses remain adaptive, responsive, and committed to customer-first objectives. Organizations can continuously refine strategies based on measurable insights to enhance customer satisfaction, drive sustainable growth, and contribute to broader societal impact.

Implications for Social Change

Enhancing customer engagement, feedback systems, involvement, data-driven decision-making, communication strategies, and leadership creates a ripple effect that extends far beyond business success. These elements, when implemented with care and intention, contribute to positive social change by reinforcing ethical, customer-centered

practices across industries. The impact is multifaceted, shaping individual experiences, community resilience, and broader societal norms.

Strong customer engagement fosters trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty, ultimately improving overall well-being. Business leaders who prioritize meaningful interactions help cultivate a consumer culture rooted in mutual respect and collaboration. The effects extend beyond individual transactions, strengthening economic resilience by ensuring sustainable business growth. When companies build strong relationships with their customers, they do more than increase revenue—they nurture a marketplace that values connection and integrity.

Actively gathering and implementing customer feedback allows businesses to create products and services that align more closely with human needs and societal demands. This participatory approach democratizes business decisions, fostering inclusivity and empowering individuals to shape their environments. As companies listen to their customers, they reduce inequalities in access to high-quality goods and services, ensuring that their offerings serve a broader and more diverse audience.

Involving customers at every level of decision-making transforms organizations from hierarchical entities into collaborative communities. When businesses empower customers to contribute to product development, strategy formulation, and ethical considerations, they mirror democratic governance structures. This approach encourages civic engagement and a participatory culture, vital components of societal equity. By making customers active participants in business decisions, companies reinforce values of transparency and shared responsibility.

The ethical use of data-driven metrics enhances transparency, accountability, and equitable growth. By tracking customer needs and analyzing performance with integrity, businesses drive evidence-based strategies that improve social well-being. These data-informed decisions go beyond corporate success—they strengthen policymaking and ensure that public services and business initiatives evolve in response to the dynamic needs of individuals and communities.

Clear, timely, and empathetic communication is a cornerstone of trust and transparency. Businesses that model compassionate dialogue set a standard for broader societal interactions, dismantling misinformation and fostering emotional intelligence in customer relationships. Strong communication practices don't just strengthen brand loyalty; they elevate discourse in media, politics, and community relations, cultivating an environment where honest and meaningful exchanges are valued.

Leadership plays a crucial role in establishing a customer-first culture. Executives who prioritize ethical customer relations inspire organizational cultures grounded in social responsibility. When business leaders champion human-centered values, they influence societal norms, encouraging institutions, communities, and governments to adopt ethical leadership practices that prioritize dignity, respect, and inclusivity. Their commitment to ethical business practices extends far beyond corporate walls, shaping industries and inspiring positive change in society.

At its core, customer-centric business practices are about more than profitability—they are a force for transformation. When businesses operate with integrity, inclusivity, and responsiveness, they not only enhance their own success but also

contribute to a more equitable and compassionate society. The ripple effect of these practices is profound, influencing industries, communities, and everyday interactions in ways that make the world a more connected and conscientious place.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Positive social change refers to continuously improving human and social conditions by promoting individual dignity, community empowerment, organizational ethics, institutional transparency, and cultural evolution (Bhandari, 2023). The principles outlined above reinforce the inherent worth of individuals by integrating consumer voices into decision-making, cultivating empathetic relationships, ensuring ethical leadership, and fostering democratic participation in shaping economic and social landscapes.

Individuals are valued by embedding these principles into corporate and societal frameworks, businesses and institutions contribute to a more just and equitable world from their perspectives, communities thrive through inclusivity, organizations operate with integrity, and cultures evolve toward greater cooperation and ethical stewardship (Bhandari, 2023). The cumulative effect leads to a society where economic transactions are not merely profit-driven but serve as mechanisms for human development and collective well-being.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research in business practices should concentrate on improving customer engagement, feedback mechanisms, involvement, data-driven decision-making, communication, and leadership. Understanding how AI can personalize interactions, refining omnichannel experiences, and analyzing the effect of emotional branding on

loyalty is valuable to businesses. Real-time feedback loops, sentiment analysis tools, and co-creation models can strengthen business strategies: crowdsourced decision-making, gamification, and community-led innovation foster customer involvement. Predictive analytics can enhance customer retention, while ethical AI practices ensure responsible use of data. AI-driven communication in customer service, crisis management strategies, and transparency can contribute to trust-building. Leadership research should explore executive influence on customer-centric cultures, cross-industry approaches, and the role of ethical decision-making in business success. Addressing current limitations requires expanding sample sizes, leveraging AI and big data analytics, testing long-term impacts, and integrating insights from psychology, sociology, and behavioral economics to enrich research.

Conclusion

Enhancing customer engagement, feedback integration, involvement, data-driven metrics, communication, and executive leadership is essential for business success. Integrating AI and customer relationship management (CRM) systems further strengthens these efforts by enabling businesses to automate processes, personalize customer interactions, and analyze vast amounts of data for strategic decision-making (Zhang, 2024). AI-driven insights improve predictive analytics, sentiment analysis, and automated engagement, while CRM systems serve as a central hub for managing customer relationships efficiently (Zhang, 2024). Future research should address existing limitations through broader sample sizes, technological advancements, long-term impact assessments, and cross-disciplinary insights. By refining best practices and exploring

innovative solutions, businesses can cultivate stronger customer relationships, improve operational efficiency, and foster a customer-centric culture that drives long-term growth.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

I used semistructured interviews to collect the data. The interview questions included the following:

1. What strategies do you use to retain customers?
2. What strategy do you consider the most effective in retaining customers?
3. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you use to retain customers?
4. What barriers did you experience in implementing strategies to retain customers?
5. How did you overcome the critical barriers in implementing strategies for customer retention?
6. How do you communicate and seek to implement your strategies through your employees involved with customer retention?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

I presented this interview protocol to each research participant at the beginning of the interview session.

Action	Script
Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee.	"Hello, thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project. I appreciate the criticality you attach to the expected findings. I have been working on a degree for a Doctor of Business Administration for the past few years. In this project, I am exploring the strategies business leaders retain customers" "A few weeks ago, you agreed to sign an informed consent form. Do you have any questions for me or any matter that requires my attention? This interview is confidential, and your identity and that of your organization shall remain anonymous and represented by codes." "I will collect data using semistructured interview questions. The idea is to allow you to explain any strategies, events, and memories that answer the interview questions. During your narration, I may prompt you for further explanation and details." "I will need to record your responses so that I do not miss anything." "Note that you may rescind your decision to participate in the research anytime."
Ask Interview Questions to get in-depth responses. Listen for nonverbal cues. Paraphrase as needed.	" 1. " What strategies do you use to retain customers 2. " What strategy do you consider the most effective in retaining customers? 3. " How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies you use to retain customers?"

Action	Script
	4. " What barriers did you experience in implementing strategies to retain customers?" 5. " How did you overcome the critical barriers in implementing strategies for customer retention?" 6. How do you communicate and seek to implement your strategies through your employees involved with customer retention?"
Schedule transcript review either by phone or email.	"In a few days, I will need your assistance in authenticating my understanding of your responses to the interview questions as part of the research process. You may adjust the script or add to your initial responses if needed. I will send the transcript by email, and we can discuss it by phone if you agree."
Introduce a member checking review and set the stage.	"Thank you for agreeing to meet me today to finalize what I heard from you during the interview and the meaning I have provided for each response."
Wrap up the interview by thanking participants.	"Your contribution to this doctoral research has been most impressive, and I thank you very much for helping me to achieve the doctoral degree. I hope you will find the research findings beneficial to your organization and professional development."