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Exploring Satisfaction and Retention Strategies for Generation Y Customers

Edmund Ehichioya Otaigbe
Walden University

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College of Management and Technology

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Edmund Otaigbe

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Exploring Satisfaction and Retention Strategies for Generation Y Customers

by

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MBA, University of Benin, 2005

BEng, Federal University of Technology, Akure, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2018

Abstract

Firms in the service industry have experienced a 15-30% drop in customer satisfaction ratings and an estimated \$10 billion annually due to the unpredictable tendencies of one of the most significant and fastest growing consumer segments in the marketplace, Generation Y customers. The distinctive behavior of this sizeable generational cohort may be reshaping the business landscape of the 21st century regarding how consumers will relate to service providers in the future. Using the theory of customer satisfaction management system, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the customer satisfaction strategies that business leaders in southern Nigeria use to retain Generation Y customers. The participants included business leaders who have successfully retained Generation Y customers by applying customer satisfaction business strategies in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. The data were collected through semistructured one-on-one interviews with 3 business leaders from different sectors of the service industry. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretations, methodological triangulation of the data sources and member checking were used. The process of data analysis included word frequency analysis, coding of related phrases, identification of patterns, and generation of themes around the codes. The themes that emerged from the study were (a) positive brand image creation, (b) social media as an enabler, and (c) quality service and timely delivery. This study may create awareness for business leaders on how to satisfy and retain Generation Y customers. This awareness has the potential of promoting positive social change among business leaders because of the significant contribution profitable businesses bring to the societies and communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God who has been very generous with all the graces required to complete this project. To my support system anchored by dear wife, Bosede, and our adorable children Ose, Ehi, Deba, and Ik, for your encouragement and understanding especially for the long hours and days I have deprived you all my presence in pursuit of this goal. I also dedicate this study to all researchers, business leaders and institutions that are committed to making a positive change in the world by continually seeking out business problems and helping to find solutions.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Customer satisfaction ratings in the service industry in Nigeria have declined in industries such as automobiles, mobile operators, banking, and supermarkets (Berges, Guillén, Moreno, & Ontiveros, 2014). The coming of age of the largest and fastest growing generational cohort, Generation Y, is reshaping the business landscape of the 21st century (Bolton et al., 2013). Parment (2013) stated that the inconsistent behavior of the members of Generation Y cohort might determine how customers will relate to service providers in the future. Therefore, the ability of business leaders to satisfy Generation Y consumers is a significant decision for business success and long-term profitability (Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015). I conducted a qualitative study to examine Kandampully et al.'s (2015) suggestion and understand the strategies business leaders have used to satisfy Generation Y customers.

Background of the Problem

Business leaders are interested in understanding the buying behaviors of Generation Y customers because of the potential effect of the rising purchasing power of this population in the retail marketplace (Rieke, Fowler, Chang, & Velikova, 2016). In the United States, Generation Y members constitute 27% of the country's population, and the annual spending of this group grew from \$97.3 million in 2003 to \$200 billion in 2015 (Bowen & Chen McCain, 2015; Donnelly & Scaff, 2013). Researchers estimate that members of the Generation Y cohort will spend over \$10 trillion during their lifetime (Rieke et al., 2016). Despite the increased disposable income, Generation Y consumers

are more unpredictable than Generation X and baby boomers (Amin, 2016; Kandampully et al., 2015).

Customer satisfaction refers to the sum of a customer's experiences with a firm (Gizaw & Pagidimarri, 2014). A lack of customer satisfaction (also called dissatisfaction) can adversely affect the revenues of a company because most businesses depend on steadily increasing customer patronage (Chuah, Marimuthu, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2017). As the business landscape becomes increasingly dynamic and competitive, business leaders have acknowledged a need to devise strategies to keep customers satisfied and committed to the organization's brand (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Chuah et al., 2017).

Social media, customer perceived value, co-creation, brand ambassador, customer engagement, and customer communities are some of the emerging concepts describing customers' new mindsets that business leaders now seek to understand and exploit to gain traction (Kandampully et al., 2015). Several researchers found a positive relationship between service quality (Choudhury, 2014), customer satisfaction (Kaura, 2013), customer loyalty (Chodzaza & Gombachika, 2013), and firm performance (Choudhury, 2014). However, there is little information about how the emerging concepts relate to Generation Y customers. The objective of this research study was to explore the customer satisfaction strategies used by business leaders to elicit desired outcomes in Generation Y customers for business success and long-term profitability.

Problem Statement

In Nigeria, the failure of business leaders to satisfy their customers has led to a loss of revenue (Adebayo, 2013). Over the last decade, firms in the service industry have experienced a 15-30% drop in customer satisfaction ratings and an estimated \$10 billion annually due to the inconsistent and less brand loyal tendencies of Generation Y customers (Ascarza, Iyengar, & Schleicher, 2016). With more than 25% of the world's population and a spending power estimated at \$34 trillion, members of the Generation Y cohort have emerged as an economically robust cluster (Bilgihan, 2016; Nusair, Bilgihan, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2013). The general business problem is the failure of some business leaders in the service industry to satisfy their customers, which has led to a loss of revenue in the industry. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore customers satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. The targeted population was business leaders who have successfully retained Generation Y customers by applying customer satisfaction business strategies in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. The implication for positive social change included the potential to (a) increase the number of successful businesses in Nigeria, (c) foster job security, and (d) increase the ability of employees to engage in activities that enhance personal development and contribution to the communities in which they live.

Nature of the Study

The three most frequently used research methods in the social sciences are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Guercini, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). In a qualitative method, researchers use open-ended questions to obtain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context (Salmona, Kaczynski, & Smith, 2015). In contrast, quantitative research involves using closed-ended questions to examine the relationship between variables based on a theory or hypotheses (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Quantitative research is also suitable for areas of study where the researchers may have sufficient information about the topic but require further analysis to understand the relationships among the variables (Muskat, Blackman, & Muskat, 2012). Mixed-methods research involves applying both qualitative and quantitative methods to complement each other in a study (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Researchers use a mixed method approach where the use of only qualitative or quantitative methods may not be appropriate for a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The rationale for selecting a qualitative method for my research was the goal of conducting an in-depth inquiry into the views of business leaders on strategies used to satisfy the Generation Y customers; the study did not involve analysis of statistical data, which is typical for a quantitative or mixed method approach.

In selecting the qualitative research design, I considered several designs before choosing a multiple case study. Certain qualitative designs were inappropriate. For example, the narrative design involved analysis of individuals' story in a social and cultural context (Nguyen, Melewar, & Chen, 2013). An ethnographic design was not

suitable because it involves the description and interpretation of shared patterns of a culture-sharing group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Raitani & Vyas, 2014). A phenomenological design was not adequate because researchers using this research design focus on the lived experiences of individuals to evaluate a phenomenon, which is an exhaustive and challenging process (Bourne, 2015). My preferred approach was the case study research design because it is most suitable where flexibility and a holistic investigation of descriptions from all participants are necessary (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Donnelly, Gabriel, & Özkazanç-Pan, 2013).

Research Question

What customer satisfaction strategies do business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies did you use to satisfy the Generation Y customers in your organization?
2. How were these strategies useful in satisfying Generation Y customers?
3. What strategies have you found least helpful in satisfying Generation Y customers?
4. In what ways has your customer satisfaction strategies assisted in retaining Generation Y customers?
5. What strategies do you use to increase the acceptance of your products or services by Generation Y customers?

6. How have you positioned or enhanced your brand image to retain Generation Y customers?
7. In what ways have your operating systems and procedures been adapted to retain Generation Y customers?
8. What additional information would you like to add to customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a contextual lens used in developing the knowledge for understanding the phenomenon of a study (Landerer, 2013). The theory of customer satisfaction management system (CSMS) was the conceptual framework that guided this study. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) developed the CSMS model (Jesri, Ahmadi, & Fatehipoor, 2013; Negi & Ketema, 2013). The theorists posited that CSMS involves using a calculated and methodical approach to customer satisfaction that incorporates continuous improvement for businesses (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012). Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) argued that the focus of CSMS involves (a) repositioning and enhancing brand image, (b) enriching an organization's reputation, and (c) preserving the future value of a business. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) identified other factors that enhance customers' satisfaction as (a) increase in stock price, (b) increasing the credibility of new products development, and (c) examining the reality of a connection with stakeholder return. Understanding and realigning a pattern of customer behavior based on customer satisfaction levels may assist in identifying and managing customers'

changing needs. Therefore, the CSMS theory aligns with this study on exploring the satisfaction and retention strategies for Generation Y customers.

Operational Definitions

Baby boomers: Baby boomers are individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Li, Li, & Hudson, 2013).

Customer churn: Customer churn refers to the tendency for customers to defect or stop patronizing a company's brand or product without notice, either immediately or gradually over a relatively short period (Borle, Singh, Jain, & Patil, 2016).

Customer engagement: Customer engagement is a process of conveying messages that are important, that resonate with consumers, and that makes customers passionate about and involved with a firm's brand (Maslowska, Malthouse, & Collinger, 2016).

Customer loyalty: Customer loyalty is a deeply held commitment to repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service and to spread positive word-of-mouth to attract new customers (Kim, Vogt, & Knutson, 2015).

Customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is a psychological construct that indicates how the goods and services offered by a firm meet the expectations of customers (Kashif, Wan Shukran, Rehman, & Sarifuddin, 2015).

Generational cohorts: Generational cohorts are groupings of people who share similar beliefs, values, and attitudes because of shared experiences of sociohistorical events that may have occurred (Twenge, 2013).

Generation X: Generation X is the classification for individuals born between 1965 and 1979 (Gardiner, Grace, & King, 2015).

Generation Y: Generation Y is the classification for people born between 1980 and 2000 (Bowen & Chen McCain, 2015).

Millennial: Millennial is the generation of people that reached young adulthood in the early 2000s (Donnelly & Scaff, 2013).

Service quality: Service quality is the difference between customers' expectation before a service encounter and their perceptions of the actual service after the experience (Choudhury, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is a fact about something that a researcher considers correct but cannot verify (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Three assumptions pertain to this research. The first assumption was that the participating business leaders play significant roles in the planning, communication, and execution of customer engagement strategies in their organizations. The second assumption was participating business leaders provided unbiased views on their organizations' customer satisfaction and retention strategies. The third assumption was participating business leaders responded to the interview questions honestly, truthfully, and to the best of their abilities.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study (Denscombe, 2013). An inherent limitation of this study was the inability to generalize the findings; the study was limited to a geographic region. The second limitation was the sample size involving three

business leaders from different companies. Lastly, time and cost may limit the data collection process.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries or restrictions that researchers set for the study to limit its scope (Merriam & Tisdell 2015; Wahyuni, 2012). Researchers have control and could specify the elements that are not featured in a research to define the scope of the study. The first delimitation was the geographical location; all participants were from businesses operating in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. The second delimitation was the industry. Only business leaders in the service industry with experience in implementing customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers participated in the study. The last delimitation was the sample size. The sample size for qualitative research is small because the focus was more on the richness of the data, which requires more time to collect from the participants (Yin, 2014).

Significance of the Study

Value of the Study to Businesses

The study may be significant to business leaders in the service industry who are struggling because of their inability to satisfy and retain Generation Y customers. Bowen and Chen McCain (2015) identified customer satisfaction, acquisition, and retention as measures that may help firms become financially stable and develop a stronger brand image. Increased profitability due to a large base of loyal customers may also translate to long-term value for companies (Kandampully et al., 2015). This study should be relevant, and business leaders should use the research findings to develop strategies for satisfying

and retaining customers to overcome industry challenges that may affect long-term sustainability.

Contribution to Business Practice

Marinkovic and Obradovic (2015) noted that findings from research studies may indicate both short- and long-term benefits to business leaders and stakeholders. By understanding the peculiarities of Generation Y consumers, business leaders can effectively optimize appropriate engagement strategies that would result in customer loyalty and long-term business success. Business leaders could also connect better with this different set of consumers to co-create products and services that would foster communication, bonding, trust, and competitive advantage.

Implications for Social Change

Organizations with a large pool of satisfied customers tend to have a long-term competitive advantage over their competitors and are more likely to sustain their profitability over a longer period (Bhat & Darzi, 2016; Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). The implication for positive social change from this study's findings includes the potential to create more businesses that are successful where leaders can make significant contributions to communities, and job security for employees (Heinonen, 2014; Weber, Diaz, & Schwegler, 2014).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. The objective of the literature review was to provide published research and documentation

on Generation Y consumers, customer satisfaction, and customer engagement strategies adopted by leaders in the service industry. Business leaders need to examine their customer satisfaction strategies about Generation Y customers given the vast economic potential of this generational cohort (Berges et al., 2014; Chhetri, Hossain, & Broom, 2014). The prevalence of information technology and mobile telecommunication, which researchers have argued to be major influencers of the behavioral lifestyles of the Generation Y cohort, drives demand in the 21st-century marketplace (Dootson, Beatson, & Drennan, 2016; Mittal & Agrawal, 2016). In terms of behavioral attributes, most Generation Y members (a) want immediate responses to issues, (b) are more critical of institutional advertisements, (c) like to have some involvement with their brands, (d) rely heavily on the opinions of their peers through interactive online media, and (e) are fickle with their loyalty (Bucic, Harris, & Arli, 2012; Harris, Cox, Musgrove, & Ernstberger, 2016). Business leaders, therefore, need to rethink their business approach and embrace the new paradigm of customer satisfaction (Bhat & Darzi, 2016) to take advantage of the unique Generation Y population (Chahal & Bakshi, 2015; Vyas & Raitani, 2014). Customer satisfaction is a concept that connects with other concepts such as co-creation, customer communities, and social media engagement that helps business leaders to place customers as co-owners, co-creators of value, brand advocates, and emotionally loyal customers (Preikschas, Cabanelas, Rudiger, & Lampon, 2017).

The following online databases contain many peer-reviewed articles and relevant management literature used for this review: Emerald Management, Sage Premier, EBSCOhost, ProQuest Central, Science Direct, Business Source Complete,

ABI/INFORM Complete, Dissertations and Theses, Google Scholar, and World Bank Open Knowledge Repository. The primary search terms included keywords such as *customer satisfaction management systems (CSMS)*, *Generation Y*, *customer satisfaction*, *customer retention*, *customer engagement*, and *customer loyalty*. Secondary search terms included a combination of the keywords with action keywords such as *emerging economies*, *population*, *business strategy*, *competitive advantage*, *consumer behavior*, *social media*, *co-creation*, *customer communities*, *sustainability*, and other variations of these words. I also used Google Scholar to achieve two objectives. The first step was to search for the most recent contributions to my research topic in multiple databases. As a strategy, I activated Google Scholar alerts using a combination of the keywords to receive prompt notifications on all recently published articles. When I located an article related to my study, I investigated the journal using *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* to confirm that it is a peer-reviewed journal before reviewing the article. As the second objective, I used Google Scholar to find out if there has been any further study on any published article of interest by searching for authors who cited the article and mining the list.

I reviewed 155 sources, of which 89% were peer-reviewed articles within 5 years of the anticipated chief academic officer (CAO) approval date in April 2018. Table 1 includes a summary of the resources used for the literature review.

*Table 1**Frequency and Percentage of the Study Sources*

Resources	References		Total	%
	Within 5 years	Older than 5 years		
Books	4	0	4	
Peer-reviewed articles	134	17	151	89
Government	0	0	0	
Other resources	0	0	0	
Total	138	17	155	89

Customer Satisfaction Management System

Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) developed the customer satisfaction management system (CSMS) theory in 2012 to develop a more robust framework for understanding the concept of customer satisfaction. The theorists observed that previous researchers emphasized one-dimensional benefits of customer satisfaction. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) posited that customer satisfaction management must extend beyond improving these effects. The CSMS theory involves using a strategic and systematic approach to customer satisfaction that incorporates continuous improvement for businesses (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012).

CSMS is useful in measuring the value of a strategic focus on customer satisfaction that might result in a competitive advantage for business sustainability (Gizaw & Pagidimarri, 2014). Alvarez-Garcia, Rio-Rama, and Simonetti (2017) appraised customer satisfaction as a key factor in management that helps to improve organizational competitiveness and productivity. Improvement in quality service is necessary to increase the profitability of an organization (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017). Improved quality service is performed through real customer satisfaction that allows an

organization to promote customer loyalty and retention (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017). Munari, Lelasi, and Bajetta (2013) evaluated customer satisfaction as the quality of service perceived by the customer as a comparison between the expectations about the service that will be received and the perception about the performance of the service received.

Customer satisfaction is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure of a customer from the comparison of the actual service received to the expectations before the experience (Nabavi, Azizi, & Faezipour, 2014). The concept of customer satisfaction relies on the paradigm of pre-purchase expectations and disconfirmation; the difference between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase perception (Nabavi et al., 2014). Rostami, Valmohammadi, and Yousepoor (2014) stated that if the perception exceeds the expectations, the customer is satisfied. Rostami et al. (2014) argued that service quality is the antecedent for customer satisfaction. Munari et al. (2013) identified customer satisfaction factors as (a) adequate layout and equipment for customer service; (b) comfort; opening hours, queuing management system in place; and (c) pricing. Other factors that could determine customer satisfaction are (a) problem-solving ability of staff, (b) functional quality such as reliability and response time to complaints, and (c) reputation (Munari et al., 2013).

Effective customer satisfaction strategies may lead to sustainable enterprises, regarding sustained profitability, increased long-term customer retention, improved firm reputation, and enhanced sustainability (Abram, Picard, Navarro, & Piolino, 2014). Suriyankietkaew (2016) stated that customer satisfaction is the most important non-

financial indicator of overall business success and sustainability. Shi, Tang, Zhang, Gao, and Zhu (2016) identified organizational factors affecting customer satisfaction as: staff retention, valuing people, environmental responsibility, stakeholder focus, shared vision, team orientation, enabling culture, knowledge retention, and sharing innovation, staff engagement, and quality.

Customer satisfaction is an important measurement outcome for corporate sustainability (Shi et al., 2016). Shi et al. (2016) described customer satisfaction as the attitude of consumers toward a product or service after receiving purely positive or negative word of mouth; the customer then compares the experience with practical experience. Basuroy, Gleason, and Kannan (2014) linked customer satisfaction with financial performance such as shareholder value, cash flow, return on investment, and accounting returns. The logic behind the relationship between customer satisfaction and its positive effect on customer retention (Basuroy et al., 2014) is that an increase in customer satisfaction will boost customer retention and generate future revenues for the business (Dean, Griffin, & Kulczynski, 2016; Basuroy et al., 2014).

Ziqiong, Zili, and Rob (2013) stated that a satisfied customer becomes a loyal customer, provides positive word-of-mouth, and repeats future purchases, which leads to increased future revenue and improved stock price of the business. Ziqiong et al. (2013) discovered that customers living in societies with high economic prosperity were likely to express less satisfaction with products and services compared with other customers living in economically depressed areas. Olsen, Witell, and Gustafsson (2014) identified three areas of customer orientation, which included strategy, measurement and analysis, and

implementation. Some strategies adopted by business leaders on customer satisfaction include the following expressions; *the customer comes first*, *the customer is king*, and *the customer is always right* (Olsen et al., 2014). Customer satisfaction serves as a measurement tool in evaluating the performance of goods, services, and employees' performance (Olsen et al., 2014). The main customer orientation activities include designing, collecting, analyzing, making decisions, and improving offering based on data collected from clients in a satisfaction interview process (Basuroy et al., 2014; Shi et al., 2016).

Supporting and Rival Theories

Conceptualizing customer satisfaction from the context of either (a) antecedents of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Fraering & Minor, 2013), (b) customer decision making processes (Ajzen, 2015), or (c) the marketing strategies organizations implement to influence consumer behavior (Hitt, Xu, & Carnes, 2016) may illumine relevant strategies for businesses. The expectancy-disconfirmation theory, theory of planned behavior, and the resource-based theory were examined to determine their suitability in understanding the customer satisfaction strategies leaders use to engage Generation Y customers.

Expectancy-disconfirmation theory. Expectancy-disconfirmation theory consists of three constructs: expectations, product performance, and disconfirmation (Fraering & Minor, 2013). Customers always compared their perceptions of the performance of goods and services with their post-consumption evaluation of the actual real performance or service experience (Fraering & Minor, 2013). A confirmation occurs

when the level of satisfaction from actual performance exceeds the perceived performance before the experience. The theory may offer some understanding of the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction.

The practice of relying on the expectation-disconfirmation theory to examine customer's responses to an organization's products and services has been criticized by marketers and scholars for its failing to measure the psychological consequence and degree of customers' reaction to consumption situations (Bowden, 2009; Kashif, Abdur Rehman, & Pileliene, 2016). Bowden-Everson, Dagger, and Elliott (2013) noted that the application of the expectation-disconfirmation framework for measuring customer satisfaction may be substandard because the framework assumes that all customers can be treated in the same way to achieve certain levels of post consumption satisfaction. Kashif et al. (2016) also tested and supported the view that previous notions that high levels of satisfaction may lead to increased customer loyalty and profitability for organizations may not hold true in all cases.

Theory of planned behavior. The theory of planned behavior is an extension of the theory of reasoned action, which refers to behavioral intentions as a function of the belief that performing a particular behavior will lead to some expected outcomes (Ajzen, 2015). The theory of planned behavior addresses the limitations of incomplete volitional control in the earlier theory of reasoned action by including the factor of perceived behavioral control as a result of the possession of resources and opportunities that would support the anticipated behavioral action (Ajzen, 2015). In this regard, the resources and

opportunities available to the individual confer some form of authority or perceived control over the behavior (Ajzen, 2015).

The theory helps researchers to understand the consumer decision-making process instead of relying on the utility or post-consumption evaluation of a product or service. Research anchored on this theory assesses what beliefs may influence consumer behavior while taking other factors such as demography and age into consideration (Ajzen, 2015). The theory's limitation is the assumption that consumers may not be rational all the time and that behavioral control may be poorly informed (Ajzen, 2015).

Resource-based theory. Kozlenkova, Samaha, and Palmatier (2014) described the resource-based theory (RBT) as a platform for understanding and projecting the competitive advantage and performance of organizations. Business leaders use the theory as a guide to investment decisions because it provides a link between the resources available to the company and proposed marketing strategy. Hitt, Xu, and Carnes (2016) suggested that using RBT, firms could create and sustain competitive advantages through the collection and integration of rare, valuable, non-substitutable products and resources. Businesses strive to differentiate their goods and services from competitors to earn and sustain a competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2016).

The use of RBT helps organizations to be research-focused, plan operations effectively, use supply chain management, ensure performance management, and implement product and services innovations (Chae, Yang, Olson, & Sheu, 2014). Firms can improve their competitive advantage and performance by differentiation of products to increase customer satisfaction (Chae et al., 2014). Scholars have also criticized the

approach as static because the argument does not seem to recognize the impact on resources in dynamic markets (Kozlenkova et al., 2014).

Customer Satisfaction and its Dimensions

Eberle, Milan, and Dorion (2016) described customer satisfaction as the perceived quality of a service based on the comparison between perceptions and actual performance on the value attributed to the experienced level of quality. The dimensions of customer satisfaction include service quality, customer value, customer feedback, cross selling to satisfied customers, customer retention, and brand image (Al-Hubaishi, Ahmed, & Hussain, 2017). The effectiveness of CSMS implementation in organizations indicates the emphasis organizations place on customer satisfaction dimensions, and the competitive advantage desired.

The objective of service quality is to achieve customer satisfaction (Hosseini, Zadeh, & Bideh, 2013). Service quality has strong connections with and serves as a significant measure of customer satisfaction (Keisidou, Sarigiannidis, Maditinous, & Thalassinou, 2013). Rauch, Collins, Nale, and Barr (2015) identified service product, service delivery, and service environment as the primary determinants of service quality.

CSMS implementation in organizations helps to highlight the degree of alignment between business service quality and customer satisfaction (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012). Stamenkov and Dika (2015) noted the need for organizations to enhance two aspects of service quality such as design quality and conformance quality to satisfy customers. Design quality refers to the degree to which the product and service align with their clients' needs and expectation, while conformance quality matches product and

service features to specifications so customers may associate the specifications to the service experience (Stamenkov & Dika, 2015).

Rauch et al. (2015) explained that service quality in a hotel business involves clean rooms, comfortable beds, quiet stay, safety and security, and location. Other measures of quality service in a hotel business are comfortable beddings, high-quality bathroom linens, adequate lightings and well-maintained furniture and fittings (Rauch et al., 2015). Al-Hubaishi et al. (2017) identified government service quality areas as public health, education, police, ambulance, and utilities. Khudri and Sultana (2015) identified the key indices of service quality in the beverage industry as personal interaction, appearance, reliability, policy, and problem-solving abilities. Customers' responses to negative service quality from the mobile telecommunication providers are due to factors such as; service delays, disconnections, lack of access, and inadequate security in mobile services. Sahai and Jain (2014) evaluated the SERVQUAL model of quality service based on people, processes, and physical evidence of quality service. The dimensions of the SERVQUAL model includes (a) tangibility; physical appearance, (b) reliability; delivering of service as promised, (c) responsiveness, (d) assurance, and (e) empathy. Overall, an understanding of the factors that influence the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction may lead to insights on customer satisfaction strategies in line with the CSMS model (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012).

Customer value. Conti (2013) described customer value as a trade-off between benefits and costs involved in customer service. The concept of customer value connects with the principle of shareholder value, customer lifetime value (CLV) and customer

relationship management (CRM), which are essential elements of CSMS (Keranen & Jalkala, 2014). Martelo-Landroquez and Cegarra-Navarro (2014) identified customer value as a significant factor for business success and competitive advantage.

Organizations cannot overemphasize the importance of understanding what customers perceive as a value for the firm. Keranen and Jalkala (2014) stated that customer value occurs when a company can use its resources to achieve desired goals. Customer value in organizations depends on the firm's ability to have the right people with the right knowledge in the right place and at the right time (Conti, 2013). Customer value is a strategic tool for attracting and retaining customers (Thakur, 2014).

Landroquez, Castro, and Cepada-Carrion (2013) identified three areas of measuring customer value as customer perceived value, creating and delivering customer value, and value of the customer. Keranen and Jalkala (2014) identified three customer value assessment strategies including emergent value sales strategy, lifecycle value management strategy, and dedicated value specialist strategy. The link between both findings is that business leaders take into consideration the perception of customers while developing the value propositions of firms (Landroquez et al., 2013; Thakur, 2016). Therefore, in devising customer satisfaction strategies, a key factor is the ability to create and deliver superior customer value as compared to the competition (Conti, 2013; Landroquez et al., 2013). CSMS plays a significant role in attaining customer value (Zameer, Tara, Kausar, & Mohsin, 2015).

Customer feedback. Eckert (2017) appraised customer feedback as positive and negative comments as well as suggestions for product or service improvements. The use

of feedback is to provide insight into a company's performance in any of the marketing mix in terms of people, place, processes, and promotion (Eckert, 2017). Service oriented organizations use feedback to examine if they satisfy their customers, gauge customer perception, learn what the customer wants and needs, and discover what the customer knows that may contribute to service improvement (Celuch, Robinson, & Walsh, 2015; Wepener & Boshoff, 2015). Kim, Chio, and Verma (2017) described positive feedback as a report from the customer on what the organization does well to encourage such behavior while negative feedback is to highlight areas that falls below expectations. Effective feedback contains information about the performance gap (Goldring, 2015) between actual and ideal performance (Harvey, Knight, & Kitchen, 2017; Nasr, Burton, & Gruber, 2015). Nasr, Burton, Gruber, and Kitshoff (2014) evaluated feedback to contribute to an organization's appraisal in terms of performance assessment, organizational learning, overall service quality, decision-making, and competitive advantage.

Cross selling to the satisfied customer. Chinomona (2016) described cross selling as the practice of promoting additional product and service to existing customers in addition to the customer's current purchases. Sasmita and Suki (2015) assessed cross selling to be successful when firms provide effective training for the salespeople, incentives for increases in sales, sufficient promotional campaign periods, efficient knowledge transfer between departments, and teamwork. Cross selling requires wider customer acceptance of cross-buying different products and service from the same provider (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega, & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016). Anselmsson,

Bondesson, and Johansson (2014) stated that cross selling is hard to achieve with unsatisfied customers. Cross selling is the process of selling additional products or services that are different from those a customer intends to purchase (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016; Kaura, Prasad, & Sharma, 2014). The characteristics of customers in a cross-selling decision are (a) dealing with technologically sophisticated requirements by salespeople, (b) specialized customer personnel, (c) extensive buying processes, (d) multiple buying center participants, and (e) long decision periods (Anselmsson et al., 2014). Other characteristics of customers in the cross-selling decision are (a) involved purchasing needs, (b) highly customized offering and selling processes, and (c) long-term personal relationship (Anselmsson et al., 2014).

Customer retention. Customer retention is the ability of a service provider to satisfy a customer and maintain long-term relationships that will guarantee long-term buying decisions (Preikschas, Cabanelas, Rudiger, & Lampon, 2017). Matthews, Son, and Watchravesringkan (2014) evaluated requirements necessary for companies to retain their customers to include (a) open communication with clients, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) employing competent and qualified personnel. Intense competition and increased choices available to customers create new pressure on service providers to manage and satisfy their customers in long-term relationships (Coussement, 2014; de Villiers, 2015). Organizations improved their customer relationship management (CRM) to serve and facilitate closer customer relationship and to retain their customers (McCrary, Pilcher, & McMillan, 2017).

Brand image. Chinomona (2016) opined that an effective brand image is a strategy to ensure customer satisfaction and retention by organizations. Chinomona (2016) described brand image as consumers' mental picture of an organization's offering of products or services, which includes symbolic meanings that consumers associate with the specific attributes of the products or services. Brand image can also refer to the sum of brand associations held in the memories of consumers that could result in perceptions about the brand (Chinonoma, 2016; Sasmita & Suki, 2015). Sasmita and Suki (2015) noted that Generation Y consumers do not trust brands and advertisements but rely on the reviews and comments from their peers in the social media.

Anselmsson, Bondesson, and Johansson (2014) related the concept of brand image to the consumer's use of a product or service to reflect some symbolic meaning of the consumption and identity in self-expression. The implication is that Generation Y consumers may be more willing to relate with brands that have positive reviews from peers on social media platforms as a form of generational identity. The previous studies did not contain brand affinity strategies deployed by business leaders to satisfy and retain Generation Y customers (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega, & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016; Sasmita & Suki, 2015).

Customer repeat purchase. Baidya and Ghosh (2014) evaluated customer repeat purchase as the output of a successful customer satisfaction strategy. An adequate planning of the product, price, place, and promotion strategy may contribute to customer retention (Baidya & Ghosh, 2014). Kim and Kim (2014) revealed that perceived price of a product or service was more significant than the monetary price of the product and

services in retaining a customer. Kim and Kim (2014) concluded that price has an adverse effect on customer repeat purchase decision.

Perceived product quality, which may be the result of satisfaction from previous experiences, customer reviews, or brand identification, can have a positive effect on customer repeat purchase decision (Russo, Confente, Gligor, & Cobelli, 2017). Tarofder, Nikhashemi, Ferdous, Selvantharan, and Haque (2016) identified that the age of durable goods, the price difference between products, changes in product quality, and marketing promotion affect the likelihood of repeat purchase decision of customers (Tarofder et al., 2016). Despite previous studies on customers' repeat purchase strategies, none seems to have evaluated customer satisfaction strategies required by business leaders to retain the Generation Y customers.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

The five dimensions of service quality (SQ) are tangibility, empathy, assurance, reliability, and responsiveness (Baidya & Ghosh, 2014; Yuen & Thai, 2015). Kim and Kim (2014) categorized SQ characteristics into heterogeneity, intangibility, perishability, and inseparability that equate to greater inconsistency in managing customer-buying decisions. Customer satisfaction is a cognitive and affective reaction to a service quality experience (Russo, Confente, Gligor, & Cobelli, 2017). Tarofder, Nikhashemi, Ferdous, Selvantharan, and Haque (2016) inferred that while SQ relates to the management service provided to a customer to make a buying decision, customer satisfaction reflects customers' experience with the service provided. Silvestri, Aquilani, and Ruggieri (2017) concluded that customer satisfaction is the comparison between the performances of the

product purchased and the existing customer expectations before purchase. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction consists of a feeling of delight or disappointment derived from the comparison between the product performance and the expectation of the customer before purchase (Kundu & Datta, 2015). Satisfaction is the attitude of the customer toward a service provided or an emotional reaction to the difference between anticipated expectation and actual performance of the product (Kundu & Datta, 2015). Previous studies failed to reveal the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers in developing countries.

Service Quality and Market Segmentation

Bruwer, Roediger, and Herbst (2017) categorized markets into different segments based on (a) analysis of consumer response, (b) consumer characteristics, and (c) simultaneous analysis of consumer characteristics and response. Bruwer et al. (2017) described market segmentation as the divisibility of products and services to improve customer satisfaction. Kemeny, Simon, Nagy, and Szucs (2016) evaluated how online marketing through e-commerce served as a medium for customer satisfaction. Liu, McCarthy, Chen, Guo, and Song (2014) described market segmentation as the division of the total market into homogenous segments of consumers with similar needs and wants, and the segmentation process addresses the needs of each subgroup more efficiently. Fotiadis and Kozak (2017) evaluated market segmentation based on demographic and socioeconomic factors, geographic factors, psychological factors, consumer patterns (Kemeny et al., 2016), perception factors, and brand loyalty patterns. Satisfaction to Generation Y customers may require a sophisticated strategy that is culture-bound

(Guillet & Kucukusta, 2016). Understanding customer behavior is relevant toward delivering superior service quality aimed at providing customer satisfaction to existing and potential customers (Guillet & Kucukusta, 2016; Liu et al., 2014). There appears to be no previous studies on customer satisfaction strategies business leaders in Akwa Ibom have used to retain Generation Y customers.

Generation Y Purchase Behavior

Generation Y refers to individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Donnelly & Scaff, 2013). Generation Y individuals are the children of baby boomers and the younger siblings of Generation X (Ordun, 2015; Schewe et al., 2013). Another term often used to refer to Generation Y members is *millennials*, because some members of the generation reached young adulthood at the birth of the new millennium (Debevec et al., 2013; Donnelly & Scaff, 2013).

In the United States, Generation Y cohorts are the largest demographic group, with approximately 80 million members, and are likely to represent 75% of the workforce by 2030 (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014; Perry, 2015). The cohort is, therefore, an important target market for marketers whose strategy is to build brand loyalty among young customers that will remain for life (Adesiyani, 2016; Schewe et al., 2013). Researchers also have an interest in understanding the factors that influence the shopping behavior of Generation Y consumers (Bilgihan, 2016; Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeck, 2014).

The attributes of generational cohorts are distinct regarding their preferences, values, and shopping behaviors (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-

Gómez, 2015). Parment (2013) contrasted the buying habits and considerations of the baby boomers with members of Generation Y using an exploratory approach to conduct the study that included interviews with focus groups and a survey. The findings showed that while baby boomers made purchase decisions based on recommendations from a trusted retailer in the store, Generation Y's purchase process was influenced by the features of the product (Parment, 2013; Rudolph & Zacher, 2016).

Generation Y members seem to have different shopping behaviors (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015). Ordun (2015) examined how the shopping patterns of Generation Y are different from other generational cohorts. Over 2,000 customers of fashion retail companies in Turkey completed questionnaires for Ordun's study. The findings showed that for apparel buying decisions, factors such as the trend, loyalty, prestige, brand, fit, quality, advertisement, variety, and service influence the buying decisions of members of Generation Y. Price, recommendation, ambience, and availability were not as important to the Generation Y customer. Generation Y members are focused more on the product's features and online reviews from their peers (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016; Ordun, 2015).

The use of information technology may serve as a viable platform to connect with Generation Y customers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Bilgihan (2016) described Generation Y consumers as more technology-savvy and as being able to handle online marketing information five times faster than other older generational cohorts. Bilgihan proposed a model to examine how Generation Y members develop loyalty to a hotel-booking website. Data analyzed came from a questionnaire administered online to students of two

universities. The findings showed that trust and brand equity were key drivers of loyalty in online shopping for Generation Y members.

Generation Y customers are more interested in the perceived value of products or services (Parment, 2013). Yang and Lau (2015) examined generational differences of Chinese luxury hotel guests. Specifically, the study involved investigating the differences in the preferences between Chinese Generation X and Generation Y tourists by determining their loyalty biases. Yang and Lau administered survey questionnaires to guests born between 1960 and 1995 who were staying in a five-star hotel. The findings revealed that Generation Y guests exhibited value consciousness and demanded upscale quality features and security, whereas Generation X guests gave more attention to convenience and loyalty (Yang & Lau, 2015)

The use of social media platforms appears to be an effective sales platform to reach Generation Y consumers (Bolton et al., 2013). Lissitsa and Kol (2016) compared the adoption of online shopping behaviors among members of Generation Y and X from 2003 to 2012 to examine their socio-demographic features. The study included historical data from annual social survey reports for the period from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. The findings showed a higher adoption rate of Internet access by members of Generation Y compared to members of Generation X. However, regarding the volume of purchases, Generation X spent more, which indicated that Generation X members had a higher disposable income, and that members of Generation Y were just coming of age. The probability of online use diminishes with age for members of Generation X but increases for members of Generation Y (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016).

The impact of social media may be useful in predicting future behavioral patterns of Generation Y consumers (Bolton et al., 2013). Duffett (2015) investigated the influence of Facebook's advertising on the behavioral attitudes, intention to purchase, and purchase perceptions of Generation Y individuals. Data collection involved questionnaires administered to members of Generation Y cohort in South Africa. The findings revealed that Facebook advertising influenced the intention to purchase as well as the actual purchases of Generation Y users. The results indicated that Facebook has an extensive array of interactive elements such as walls, albums, blogs, and discussion forums, through which it engages with Generation Y consumers (Duffett, 2015; Fernández-Durán, 2016).

In a similar study, Hayes, van Stolk-Cooke, and Muench (2015) examined how members of different age cohorts (18-70+ years old) used Facebook. The study involved assessing 529 Facebook account holders across several broad domains through an online survey. The findings confirmed that younger adults used Facebook more frequently and experienced social outcomes from the interactions on the platform that was more positive (Hayes et al., 2015). None of the findings from previous studies has revealed customer satisfaction strategies unique to Generation Y customers.

Customer Engagement through Satisfaction

The concept of customer engagement is relatively new in relationship management (Hollebeek, 2013), and has conceptual roots in relationship marketing and the service-dominant logic (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011). Researchers in the fields of organizational behavior, cognitive psychology, and relationship marketing have

shown interest in the concept of engagement at both individual and organizational levels, and indicate the potential for positive or negative outcomes when applied (Calder, Malthouse, & Maslowska, 2016). Some of the areas in which researchers have conducted studies on customer engagement include retailing (Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014), services (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014), and social media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Yang, Lin, Carlson, & Ross, 2016).

Different scholars have presented modified definitions of customer engagement, depending on their research focus or bias (Hollebeek, 2013; Marbach, Lages, & Nunan, 2016). Bowden (2009) described customer engagement as a psychological process concerned with developing loyalty for both new and repeat-purchase customers. Brodie et al. (2011) expanded on this definition with the argument that customer engagement included both co-creative and interactive experiences customers have with an object or brand that results in a psychological state. Customer engagement includes interactive customer relationships (Brodie et al., 2011), which may be positive or negative for a firm (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan, 2016), and involves behaviors that are voluntary and discretionary (Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan, 2013).

Customer engagement plays a central role in customer relationships, and fits into strategies for continuous improvement of customer satisfaction (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Researchers have revealed that customer engagement is a customer satisfaction strategy that can lead to an increase in sales revenue and customer referral (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Leckie, Nyadzayo, and Johnson (2016) conducted a study to develop a model that demonstrates how various aspects of consumer-brand interactions within specific service

contexts influence customer brand engagement and customer satisfaction. Leckie et al. (2016) collected data from mobile phone service providers using online surveys. The findings revealed differential effects in the dimensions of affection, brand loyalty, and activation. The findings from Leckie et al.'s study connected with a study by Hollebeck and Chen (2014) on the need for business leaders to identify and manage the drivers of positive engagement outcomes (Hollebeck & Chen, 2014).

The combination of constant engagement approaches with technology has resulted in customers (Generation Y) who are more informed, empowered, interconnected, rarely loyal, and more demanding of active roles in the conceptualization of product and services (Straker & Wrigley, 2016). Straker and Wrigley (2016) examined digital channel relationships and proposed strategies for designing emotionally sensitive engagements through digital channels using three case study illustrations. These three case studies highlighted a firm's different approaches to co-creation through the intersection of people (emotion), business (strategy), and technology (digital channels). The findings align the study findings in Price, Wrigley, and Straker's (2015), who revealed the need for a deeper understanding of customer behavior as insights to co-creating value through technology.

Business leaders have adopted strategies for engaging new and existing customers (Bowden, 2009). The customer engagement ecosystem conceptual model developed by Maslowska, Malthouse, and Collinger (2016) illustrates the complex interactions within the marketing environment. Specifically, Maslowska et al. (2016) described the customer engagement ecosystem as dynamic sets of interrelationships, which is an extension of the

nomological networks referred to by Brodie et al. (2011). The model includes customer brand experience, brand dialogue behaviors; repeat purchase customer engagement behaviors, brand consumption, and shopping behaviors. The results of the study agree with Bowden's (2009), who showed that business leaders should pay attention to nonpurchase customer behaviors because of their influence on satisfaction and lifetime value.

The negative outcomes of customer engagement include (a) customers' dissociation from an object, (b) customers organizing public action against an organization, or (c) customers delivering negative word-of-mouth publicity (Brodie et al., 2011; Verleye et al., 2016). Researchers on customer engagement are apparently too focused on the positive expressions of engagement (Demangeot & Broderick, 2016; Kaltcheva, Patino, Laric, Pitta, & Imperato, 2014). Nonetheless, business leaders need to anticipate and emphasize the possible outcomes from each customer engagement strategy while managing undesired consequences that may affect customer satisfaction (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015a, 2016b).

Customer Satisfaction through Loyalty Programs

Despite the popularity of loyalty programs, researchers are still not clear about the effectiveness of loyalty programs in fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty (Gandomi & Zolfaghari, 2013). Some of the issues limiting the usefulness of loyalty programs include (a) cost concerns in administering loyalty programs by firms, (b) low levels of consumer commitment, (c) apathy due to challenges faced by users in claiming rewards, and (d) the short-lived benefits of loyalty programs due to competition (Xie & Chen,

2013). Nonetheless, loyalty programs are an aspect of marketing designed to satisfy customers and build a psychological bond between the customer and the firm (Balduz, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Xie & Chen, 2013).

Advocates believe that loyalty programs are necessary because the cost of replacing a lost customer to competition is five times more than the cost of maintaining an existing customer (Tanford, Raab, & Kim, 2013). Organizational leaders implement loyalty programs based on several propositions, such as (a) getting customers more involved with firm, (b) rewarding profitable customers, (c) influencing consumer behavior, (d) generating data about specific groups of customers, and (e) resisting competition (Berezan, Raab, Tanford, & Kim, 2015). The reward scheme in a loyalty program involves organizational leaders using various mechanisms to drive a habit such as repeat purchasing and relationship deepening with customers (Yi, Jeon, & Choi, 2013).

Considering the growing dominance of Generation Y consumers in the market space, Bowen and Chen McCain (2015) provided a commentary insight for business leaders seeking to develop loyalty models for Generation Y customers based on information gleaned from the extant literature. From the review, Bowen and Chen McCain revealed that existing loyalty models designed for baby boomers were unsuitable for Generation Y consumers. The researchers proffered that ideal models for Generation Y should include (a) instant reward, (b) apps to easily access the products, (c) a platform on the app and social media to receive customer input, (d) social responsibility initiatives relevant to Generation Y cohort, and (e) platforms that enhance social interaction in public areas (Melnyk, 2014; Melnyk & Bijmolt, 2015). The attributes of Generation Y

cohort identified by Berges et al. (2014) are in sync with the model proposed by Bowen and Chen McCain (2015), which underscores the customization of loyalty programs that align with the behavioral attributes of Generation Y customers (Banyte & Dovaliene, 2014; Dovalienė, Piligrimienė, & Masiulytė, 2016).

Tanford, Shoemaker, and Dinca (2016) carried out an evaluation of the state of research and practice of loyalty programs over a 15-year span to determine if the progressions in loyalty programs forecasted by Shoemaker and Lewis (1999) have occurred. Tanford et al. (2016) reviewed extant literature on loyalty program from 2000 to 2015, interviewed industry professionals, and classified the benefits of various hotel loyalty programs from the hospitality industry. The findings revealed a progression through more flexible benefit options and the use of information technology to enhance personalization. Tanford et al. (2016) also noted an emphasis on financial and process-focused relationships instead of psychological (Eisingerich, Auh, & Merlo, 2014; Xie & Chen, 2013) and brand-focused relationships (Lewis, 2015; Raab, Berezan, Krishen, & Tanford, 2015). Tanford et al. (2016) contended that the outlook portends a diminishing reliance on loyalty programs due to the influence of information technology, the Internet, mobile devices, and social media on consumer behavior.

Customer Retention

Customer retention refers to activities that firms undertake to encourage customers to continue buying from the company and continue patronizing its brands (Wu & Shang, 2013). The profitability, size, customer acquisition, and market share of a business influences the customer retention (Reichheld & Sasser Jr., 1990). By retaining

5% or more of customers, firms can boost profits by a minimum of 20% through repeat purchases (Reichheld & Sasser Jr., 1990). Conversely, customer termination (also called customer churn) refers to circumstances under which a customer stops patronizing a company's brand or product without notice, either immediately or gradually over a relatively short period (Borle, Singh, Jain, & Patil, 2016).

The process of customer retention involves the firm taking concrete steps to nurture and strengthen relationships with their clients, and benefiting from the maintenance or improvement in the purchase frequency from customers over time (Borle et al., 2016). The key measure in studying customer retention issues are, therefore, the frequency of purchase and how long the relationship between the customer and the firm will subsist (Hamilton, Rust, & Dev, 2017). Focusing on these issues and achieving success thereby will enhance the profitability of businesses.

Although business leaders commonly observe customer purchase behavior in retailing and can monitor repeat purchase patterns of customers, business leaders cannot determine when the customer will defect, making estimations of lifetime profitability from a customer relationship difficult to assess (Hamilton et al., 2017). In a quantitative study by Borle et al. (2016), the authors used the Bayesian data augmentation scheme to analyze purchase behavior in a marketing company. From the findings, Borle et al. (2016) discovered that a firm could progressively incorporate various information into customer lifetime purchase models to specify, estimate, and predict patterns of consumer behavior.

Some researchers have explored the use of predictive models and have been able

to identify customers who have a higher probability of defecting than other clients, thus enabling firms to direct greater effort into retaining such customers (Borle et al., 2016). Jahromi, Stakhovych, and Ewing (2014) proposed a data-mining approach to modeling non-contractual customer churn that will support customer retention and profit maximization. The researchers used transactional records of 11,021 customers of a major Australian online fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) retailer. The result reveals that a model-driven approach was an effective approach to predicting defection and developing customer satisfaction strategies.

The strategies for boosting customer retention include using economic and psychological mechanisms to increase switching cost, provide financial incentives, promote brand affiliation, or raise social status (Brashear-Alejandro, Kang, & Groza, 2016). Hamilton et al. (2017) conducted a study to understand the differences between factors that attract customers and those that retain customers. The authors carried out a large-scale survey of hotel guests of a global hotel company, asking them about the use of the hotel's amenities (a fitness center, free in-room internet access, and free bottled water) both before and after they were guests. The findings revealed that the attraction of customers and retention of customers were not of the same measure and that some of the amenities had the power to attract customers, while others had the ability to retain customers. Hamilton's et al. (2017) study suggests that investments in customer relationships depend on both the mix of new and existing customers and the business strategy of the firm (Ascarza et al., 2016).

The pricing plan is a strategy to aid customer retention (Kang, Alejandro, & Groza, 2015). Ascarza et al. (2016) examined the effectiveness of service firms that recommended pricing plans to their customers as a retention strategy. The authors conducted an experiment on clients of a South American wireless communication company and offered plan recommendations to only a select group of customers. The findings showed that being proactive and advising customers on cost-effective plans increased customer defection – to the surprise of many. The result is an indication of the influence of switching cost (Kant & Jaiswal, 2017; Oh & Kim, 2017).

Reacquiring customers that defected may form part of firm's retention strategy (Kumar, Bhagwat & Zhang, 2015). Kumar et al. (2015) conducted an empirical study to investigate whether lost customers are worth the investment in reacquisition and if they will remain profitable when reacquired. Data were from a telecommunications products and services firm covering a seven-and-a-half-year period from 2006 to 2017. The findings revealed that customers with positive first-lifetime experiences and the reasons for defection are indicators for whether the reacquired customer will accept a win-back offer. The results are similar to Calvo-Porrá, and Lévy-Mangin's (2015) findings that perceived value and service quality influence customer retention.

In an extended study, Pick, Thomas, Tillmanns, and Krafft (2016) examined customers' willingness to return without a given win-back offer by the former firm. The data was from 540 clients of a publishing house that responded to a survey. From the results, the authors discovered that the length of time of absence and level of satisfaction had a positive impact on the willingness of customers to return.

Han and Hyun (2014) conducted a similar study on customer retention in the medical tourism industry. The authors examined the impact of quality, satisfaction, trust, and price reasonableness on customer retention by administering questionnaires to international patient customers of five medical clinics in Korea. The authors revealed that confidence in the staff and the hospital's service quality and satisfaction have a positive influence on customer retention as also confirmed by Calvo-Porrall and Lévy-Mangin's (2015).

Chuah et al.'s (2017) study was on how to retain Generation Y customers. The authors examined the concept of value and its influences on the satisfaction and loyalty of Generation Y customers. The model on value was an evaluation of the relationship between perceived value, switching cost, satisfaction, alternative attractiveness, and loyalty. The findings revealed that switching cost is a hybrid between satisfaction and loyalty (Kumar et al., 2015).

Gap in Literature to Improve Business

Gizaw and Pagidimarri (2014) evaluated the CSMS in measuring the value of a strategic focus on customer satisfaction in sustaining business objectives and mission. Some other researchers appraised customer satisfaction as a tool used for improving organizational competitiveness and productivity in firms (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2017). Munari et al.'s (2013) study on customer satisfaction focused on identifying the quality of service that could influence the perception of clients. Shi et al. (2016) confirmed the factors from Munari et al.'s (2013) study to include valuing customers as stakeholders, shared vision, and environmental responsibility. Despite previous studies on customer

satisfaction strategies, none seems to have revealed customer satisfaction strategies required by business leaders that are specific to Generation Y customers.

Transition

In Section 1, I discussed the background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, and nature of the study. Next, I presented the research question, and interview questions. I also expounded on the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, as well as the significance of the study. I concluded with a comprehensive review of the academic and professional literature. Section 2 includes a more explicit and illustrative discussion on the methodology, design, participants, population and sampling, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection instruments and technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity checks I intend to adopt for the proposed study. The study concluded with Section 3, which includes a presentation of the findings and a discussion of the application of the findings to business practice, implications for social change, and recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore customer satisfaction strategies required by business leaders to retain Generation Y customers. Smith (2014) identified strong links in the process of developing connections between customer satisfaction and service industries for business sustainability. The ability to satisfy and retain customer patronage is one of the objectives of most businesses (Gizaw & Pagidimarri, 2014). Using qualitative multiple case study, I explored customer satisfaction strategies required by business leaders in Nigeria to retain Generation Y customers. Section 2 of this study includes discussion of (a) the purpose of the study, (b) role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection techniques, (i) data organization techniques, and (j) reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. The targeted population was business leaders who have successfully retained Generation Y customers by applying customer satisfaction business strategies in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to (a) increase the number of successful businesses, (b) foster job security, and (c) increase the ability of employees to engage in activities that enhance personal development and contribution to the communities in which they live.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers in qualitative studies are the principal instruments and play an active part in the data collection process (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for the data collection process. Roulston and Shelton (2015) noted that in qualitative studies, researchers conduct an in-depth investigation by examining views from participants regarding the phenomenon and interpreting the data through their lens. As the data collection instrument, my role in this study was to collect and analyze data.

My work experience of approximately 18 years to date includes assuming relationship management and business strategy roles in the banking sector. My worldview, which serves as a platform for my beliefs and values, was a major influence in my choice of a topic for this study. Fassinger and Morrow (2013) stated that a researcher should be involved in the data collection process, but that the researcher also should ensure a separation of personal bias by setting prior knowledge and interests aside from the process. To mitigate biases, I engaged in the following measures (a) setting aside any personal thoughts, (b) relying on participants' explanations, and (c) avoiding personal experiences.

To ensure high ethical research standards, I ensured I minimized all possible risks to the participants, maximized potential benefits, and treated each participant equally. I complied with the *Belmont Report* on fundamental ethical principles of research involving human research subjects, including (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979; Spurlin & Garven, 2016). The Belmont guidelines

include (a) avoiding negative behaviors toward or on research participants, (b) ensuring that risks are minimal to research participants, (c) ensuring that participants receive due respect and fair treatment in the recruitment process, and (d) adopting informed consent process in the recruitment process (Adams & Miles, 2013).

To ensure that I protected, respected, and maintained the anonymity of participants, I used codes in place of participant names. I also ensured secured access to the codes. The data collection protocol included participant interviews, business process observation, and archival document reviews. Using an interview protocol helps forestall possible influence from the researcher's worldview or unintended gestures that may sway the participants to predetermined conclusions (Browning, Thompson, & Dawson, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) stated that interview protocols contain both the set of questions for the interviews and a procedural guide for the conduct of the interview session. Using an interview protocol, the researcher ensures consistency and reduces unplanned problems during the interview process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I used the interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a prompt to guide the flow of communication, share critical details about the study with the participants, and carry out member checking.

Participants

The participants for this qualitative multiple case study were purposefully selected business leaders from service industries in Nigeria. Greenwood (2016) stated that selection of participants requires proper handling premised on eligibility criteria specific to the study. The eligibility requirements for the selection of participants were critical to

the research because of the potential influence on the quality and applicability of the research findings (He, Carini, Sim, & Weng, 2015). Nathan, Stephenson, and Braithwaite (2014) suggested that participants should be knowledgeable in the field of inquiry, having built experience from continuous working and training. In a study on how to fill gaps in ideas, Paradkar, Knight, and Hansen (2015) selected participants with substantial knowledge and experience in organizational resource management. For this study, I selected business leaders based on their involvement in devising and implementing strategies for successful customer satisfaction, customer retention, and customer service in their organizations. Eligible participants were managers who have had above three years of working experience as a manager in the service industry.

I formally requested business leaders to participate in the data collection process using the letter of invitation (see Appendix A). DeFeo (2013) noted that identifying participants with experience in the field of interest is to have accurate data capable of providing answers to the research questions. Researchers use purposive sampling to identify participants that meet the research criteria and can add value to the study (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Seidman, 2013).

King, Hebl, Botsford, Morgan, and Ahmad (2013) stated the relevance of researchers establishing cordial relationships with participants. Researchers need to demonstrate a willingness to foster a transparent and cooperative relationship with the research participants from the onset of a study (Guta, Nixon, & Wilson, 2013). In an atmosphere of mutual communication, prospects are more likely to agree to participate and answer questions freely in a one-on-one interview (DeFeo, 2013; Seidman, 2013).

After obtaining the details of potential participants, I contacted each business leader in person and over the telephone and subsequently followed up with emails. My conversation commenced with an introduction of myself followed by an explanation of the purpose of the study. Such exchanges possess the potential to strengthen ties, leading to confidence and trust.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method for this study. The qualitative research method offers some benefits to a study, including the opportunity for participants to share their experience and opinion on a phenomenon (Guercini, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Researchers adopt either unstructured or semistructured questions to understand the how, who, what and why of a phenomenon (Salmona et al., 2015). The qualitative research method allows some flexibility in the data collection process because researchers can modify the interview questions as the interview progresses (King et al., 2013; Süß & Sayah, 2013).

Additional attributes of the qualitative research method include (a) the reliance on the researcher as the principal instrument for collecting data, (b) allowing multiple participants' perspectives, (c) the use of complex inductive reasoning to organize data, and (d) presenting a composite picture of the problem under study (Lal Dey, Binsardi, Prendergast, & Saren, 2013). The qualitative research method is appropriate for examining problems where the type of data analyzed does not require measurement or

empirical analysis (Guercini, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I used the qualitative research method for this study.

The quantitative research method requires measuring sets of statistical data to test hypotheses related to a phenomenon (Muskat et al., 2012). I did not use the quantitative method because it provides fixed options for responses and lacks the explanations or deep insights required for a case study (Smartt & Ferreira, 2014; Tarhan & Yilmaz, 2014). The mixed method of research includes both the qualitative and the quantitative perspectives (Venkatesh et al., 2013; Zou, Sunindijo, & Dainty, 2014). Combining both methods of research in a study helps to validate the findings (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2016; Rea & Parker, 2014). Researchers also use the mixed method when one methodology is not sufficient to proffer explanations to the phenomenon studied. I did not use the mixed method due to my availability, time, and funding constraints for the research.

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore customer satisfaction strategies use by business leaders to retain Generation Y customers. A case study design typically leads to an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through the experiences and viewpoints of participants in a real-life context (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Yin (2014) described three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory, which give the researcher options based on the study objective. In a case study, researchers carry out an in-depth investigation of a bounded system and collect data from multiple sources, including observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, and

documented reports to understand a phenomenon (Agyemang & Castellini, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yin (2014) identified two types of case study design: the single case study and the multiple case study. The two examples of case study designs identified by Yin (2014) also have holistic or embedded variants, depending on the design situations. I adopted the multiple case study design with a holistic variant (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

Compared to the case study research design, a phenomenological design is more suitable for studying affective and often intense human experiences such as love, anger, or betrayal as it relates to a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data from the phenomenological design are unique to the context of the phenomenon studied, which made it unsuitable for my study. An ethnographic research design refers to understanding a culture-sharing group and collecting data over a prolonged period (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2016; Lyons, Urick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015). The ethnographic research design was not suitable for this study because the objective of this study was not culture related. A narrative design involves telling a story of the life experiences of participants (Nguyen et al., 2013). The narrative design was not suitable because the focus of this study is not to tell a story but to examine a phenomenon and the way it has evolved using current information. The grounded theory design is appropriate for developing data into a theory from the perspective of the participants (Cheruiyot & Maru, 2013; Cho & Lee, 2014). The focus of this study was not to develop a theory; therefore, I did not use a grounded theory design for the research.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes, concepts, or findings emerge in subsequent interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid, 2014). De Massis and Kotlar (2014) emphasized the importance of adopting deliberate measures in achieving data saturation in qualitative research. To achieve data saturation, I continued the interviewing process until no additional themes or opinions significant to the study emerged. I analyzed the data from the interview notes and recordings to check the data until no new connections emerged.

Population and Sampling

The research question and objectives of a study guide the selection of population sample (Yin, 2014). In this study, I used a multiple case study to explore the customer satisfaction strategies that business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. The population for this study included business leaders from the service industry in Nigeria who are responsible for the formulation and implementation of business strategies for customer satisfaction and retention. Consistent growth in the retail customer base and profitability formed the basis for the selection of companies for this study because the criteria are likely indicators that the leaders of the companies have a successful business strategy for customer acquisition, customer satisfaction, and retention.

This multiple case study involved the purposive sampling from business leaders in the service industry in Nigeria. Purposive sampling is the most commonly used sampling method by researchers (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013; Nathan et al., 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argued that to understand and gain insights into the phenomena, researchers use purposive sampling to select participants from which

they might gain the most information. Ritchie, Lewis, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) also explained that researchers set the criteria for selection in purposive sampling at the early design stages of research. Suri (2011) noted that purposeful sampling requires identifying key informants who can assist in determining potential participants who could contribute significantly to the study. I used the snowball technique to select the purposeful participants from departments such as customer service, business strategy, and digital services. Nathan et al. (2014) stated that participants selected for a study should have experience concerning the central criterion. I selected business leaders from different sectors of the service industry in Akwa Ibom who had knowledge and expertise in executing customer satisfaction strategies to grow the retail customer base for their organizations.

Tran, Porcher, Falissard, and Ravaud (2016) noted that the sample size to achieve data saturation is not readily determined because research designs are not universal. Schenkel, Cochran, Carter-Thomas, Churchman, and Linton (2013) used 11 participants to explore phenomena about investor exit strategies qualitatively. Suri (2011) stated that there is a higher chance of reaching data saturation if the sample size for data collection is small and the interview questions precise. Yin (2014) emphasized that a small sample size is adequate for a case study design because the focus is not on the size of the data, but the richness of the data because the objective of a case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011) suggested that interview participants should include between three and 15 participants to explore a case extensively. Robinson (2014) suggested that between three and 16 interviewees should be

sufficient to achieve saturation in an exploratory case study. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) stated that a research study should contain proof that the researcher explored the topic in depth. With these guidelines, I interviewed three participants from the service industry, knowing saturation is more confirmable with three participants, which led to rich descriptions yielding new themes and understandings.

Data saturation is the point at which no new themes emerge from the data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) described data saturation as the point a researcher has all the relevant information to understand the phenomenon and no new insights emerge even if the number of participants increases. To achieve data saturation, I continued the interview process until no significant additional themes or opinions emerged.

Ethical Research

Ethical consideration is a critical part of any research because researchers need to provide reliable findings that are ethically balanced and that pose minimal harm to the participants (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). Ethical issues become critical when researchers involve human participants in their study (Papavasileiou & Lyons, 2015; Yin, 2014). My study included engaging human subjects as representatives of organizations. As such, I addressed all the ethical concerns associated with the study.

I followed Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB)'s guide to international research in the areas of data collection, participant recruitment, data analysis, and result dissemination (Walden University, 2015). Cseko and Tremaine (2013) discussed the relevance of the IRB and the need for consistency in ensuring that

researchers observe ethical standards and respect for human subjects. Data collection and recruitment of participants for interviews took place after the members of the IRB approved the study proposal. The final report for this study included an IRB approval number #10-26-17-0466453.

The participants received letters of invitation to solicit their participation in the study (see Appendix A). Interested participants who responded positively to the letters of invitation received informed consent forms to append their signatures. Cox and McDonald (2013) noted that participants should complete and sign the informed consent forms before data collection. The informed consent forms contained pertinent information, which included (a) an introduction to the research topic and the purpose, (b) information about the role of the researcher, (c) a description of the procedures, and (d) duration of participation. Other information on the consent form included (a) clarification that participation is voluntary and withdrawal is without penalty, (b) an explanation of possible risks and expected benefits, (c) information on compensation, (d) information on confidentiality measures, and (f) storage of data.

Although incentives or compensation may influence research participants' willingness to participate in a study, some studies proceed without incentives when research subjects accept to participate voluntarily (Chen, Lei, Li, Huang, & Mu, 2015). I did not offer incentives to induce participation in the study. Consequently, I informed the participants before, and during the interview process that participation is voluntary, and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants did not need to provide explanations for their withdrawal and could communicate their intention to withdraw by

written letter, text message, telephone call, email, or any other convenient means. Guta, Nixon, and Wilson (2013) emphasized the importance of a cordial relationship between researchers and participants. At the end of the study, I shared a summary of the research findings with the participants.

Sorhaindo et al. (2016) reiterated the need for researchers to ensure confidentiality in compliance with the ethical standards and rights of the participants. Researchers need to win the trust of the participants by respecting their rights and minimizing their exposure to possible risks (Papavasileiou & Lyons, 2015). I assigned unique codes to all participants to protect their identities. I also ensured nobody had access to the identities apart from me. I assigned alphanumeric codes ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3 to each participant, representing research participants within each bounded case, to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The use of alphanumeric codes in research is to separate information from names and anything that would identify participants (Sorhaindo et al., 2016). I also maintained the same alphanumeric codes on all materials including audio recordings, interview sheets, and written notes for each participant.

Spurlin and Garven (2016) indicated that storing data in a safe place facilitates easy retrieval for future use and ensures the privacy of the data sources. To protect the confidentiality of participants, I stored the data on my personal computer, protected with a password, and on a backup Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drive locked in a fireproof safe for future use or audits. The data will be kept for five years and destroyed after that period.

Data Collection Instruments

The various types of interviews available to researchers for collecting data are (a) structured interviews, (b) semistructured interviews, and (c) unstructured interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Researchers use semistructured interviews to gain an understanding of participants' views of the phenomenon through follow-up questions (Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013). As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for collecting data in this study. Data collection approaches in qualitative research include methods such as interviews, written documents, and observations (Yin, 2014). I used both semistructured interview protocol and document review of the companies' business strategy on customer service, or customer satisfaction as data collection methods.

A semistructured interview protocol is necessary when using the multiple case study design (Morgan et al., 2013). The purpose of conducting semistructured interviews is to collect data from experts for insights into understanding the customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers. Collecting data through semistructured face-to-face interviews allows participants to describe and elaborate on individual experiences thereby enhancing the richness of the data through the discovery of new themes (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Tuttas, 2014).

Cait et al. (2016) noted that the reliability and validity of a case study starts with transcript review. Researchers also achieve reliability by ensuring the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes are in line with the study (Yin, 2014). Qualitative researchers maintain focus on the research topic throughout the data collection process to

ensure reliability (Bishop & Lexchin, 2013). I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B) and asked the same questions to all three participants for validity and reliability of the study. After the interviews, I transcribed the responses and communicated directly with participants to clarify, validate, and confirm the accuracy of the data collected. I used member checking to ensure credibility of the research (Anyan, 2013; Morgan et al., 2016). Yin (2014) described data analysis process to involve (a) interviewing of participants, (b) transcribing the data collected, (c) analysis and synthesis of interview data, (d) confirmation of accuracy of information by participants, and (e) continued member checking until data saturation and reporting. The use of archival documents is to triangulate all data through a convergence of the data to make meaningful information and ensure the reliability and validity of the research study (Cait et al., 2016). I reviewed the companies' business strategy document to have an in-depth understanding of the customer satisfaction strategies used by leaders in the service industry to retain Generation Y customers.

Data Collection Technique

The research question for the study was, what customer satisfaction strategies do business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers? Kornhaber, de Jong, and McLean (2015) noted that the research process involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to understand a phenomenon. The data for this qualitative multiple case study consisted of participants' responses and archival documents. The data collection process started by obtaining permission from Walden University's IRB. The responsibility of the IRB is to ensure research proposals complied with existing laws, institutional regulations,

and practices for ethical protection of human subjects (Muller-kahle, 2015; Sheridan, Ross-Smith, & Lord, 2014)).

The semistructured interview process commenced with scheduling meetings with participants that have signed the informed consent form. Before the semistructured interviews began, I provided a brief description of the interview process and informed participants of their option to accept or decline audio recording while answering the open-ended questions. I used a script as a prompt to share critical details about the study with the participants and to guide the flow of communication during the interviews. The format of the questions for the interviews was open-ended (see Appendix B), to encourage dialogue and urge participants to provide more insights into the phenomenon (Rossetto, 2014). While ensuring that I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B), the responses from the participants elicited further follow up questions to enrich the study. I transcribed the verbatim interview responses after the completion of the interview sessions.

Conducting one-on-one interviews, allows the researcher to observe participants' nonverbal communication when responding to questions on the phenomenon investigated (Anyan, 2013). Researchers could use semistructured interviews to establish confidentiality with participants, articulate or paraphrase questions that participants find confusing, observe participants' nuances when responding to questions, and take control of the interview session (Chen & Zhang, 2014; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Methodological triangulation consisted of interview data and archival documents. Researchers' capabilities and proficiency in conducting a qualitative study with multiple

sources of data improve on the outcome of the study (Cait et al., 2016; Donnelly, Gabriel, & Özkazanç-Pan, 2013). The comparison of archival documents on customer satisfaction and interview findings were essential to addressing the research question. The archival documents included annual reports, organization's website, and any other relevant data in the public domain. The research data constituted three sets of samples from the three companies in the service industry with each set of samples noted as a single case.

The semistructured one-on-one interview has advantages and disadvantages. One of the strengths of semistructured interviews is that it allows the researcher to observe participants' nonverbal communication when responding to questions on the phenomenon investigated (Anyan, 2013). In addition, researchers could use semistructured interviews to (a) establish confidentiality with participants, (b) articulate or paraphrase questions that participants find confusing, (c) identify when to probe and when to use icebreakers, (d) observe participants' nuances when responding to questions, (e) take control of the interview session, and (f) show appreciation to participant for sharing information (Irvine et al., 2013). Participants can also ask clarifying questions about the study (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). A disadvantage of interviews is the risk that participants may not provide honest responses to the question (Johnston, 2014). For face-to-face interviews, the challenge is travel and lodging costs for the researcher to meet with the participants at their preferred locations (Irvine et al., 2013). Using interview questions and protocols can also be time-consuming on (a) the duration of the interview sessions, and (b) transcribing interview responses (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). An advantage of using document review is the ease of accessing information promptly (Ancker et al., 2013; Edelman,

2012). One of the disadvantages of document review is that some individuals or organizations classify documented business strategies as secrets and might restrict access to such information (Edelman, 2012).

I focused on documents related to decision-making processes and Generation Y customer retention methods as it relates to business strategies for survival. I used member checking; conduct initial interview, interpret what the participants shared, and share the interpretation with the participants for validation. I used member checking to ensure accuracy of the my interpretations of the participants' responses

Data Organization Technique

Organizing research data involves a variety of measures, including sorting, analyzing, and interpreting data (Karanja, Zaveri, & Ahmed, 2013). I complied with Walden University's guidelines for data retention and storage. With an estimated duration of one hour for each interview, the amounts of data are significant. I used research logs as a data organizing technique during the data collection process to collect, record, and track all interviews. Researchers use research logs to organize data, prevent data loss, and facilitate data retrieval (Piazzoli, 2015; Sendall & Domocol, 2013).

Data organization techniques involve preserving the interview notes, collected data, both raw and coded, securely. I stored the data safely in at least two secure locations. Ruivo, Santos, and Oliveira (2014) indicated that researchers should store data based on their nature and type. I saved the data on my personal computer, protected with a password, while I kept the backup flash drive and the handwritten notes locked in a

fireproof safe throughout the study and for five years after the study. After the 5-year period, I will destroy all electronic and physical data.

Data Analysis

Data from qualitative studies are often in large amounts and in an unstructured format, which makes it difficult for the novice researcher to analyze and interpret (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Lawrence and Tar (2013) argued that grounded theory technique offers guidelines for collecting and analyzing case study data because it is well suited for dealing with data from interviews, observation or documentary sources. Data analysis must address the research question logically and sequentially (Yin, 2014). The four types of triangulation in the qualitative case study are investigator triangulation, data triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Elo et al., 2014). I used methodological triangulation for this study. Methodological triangulation involves using several data sources to (a) confirm findings, (b) compare interpretations, (c) mitigate bias, and (d) enhance the validity of the outcome (Holmes & Welby, 2015; Mina, Cristea, & Surugiu, 2014).

Mina et al. (2014) noted that data analysis includes an analysis of the triangulated information to make sense of the data. Analysis of data in a qualitative study involves making sense or interpreting the meanings of the experiences shared by participants in the study (Elo et al., 2014). Yin (2014) identified distinct data analysis techniques as (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time-series analysis, (d) logic models, and (e) cross-case synthesis. I used pattern matching and iteration for this study.

Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) stated that data analysis involves an iterative process of immersion that tasks the creative abilities of the researcher to make sense of the data. Access to the archival documents was from websites of the selected companies and public search engines. I compared the themes and patterns from the interview data with the archival document to identify convergent data.

Yin (2014) described the steps in data analysis as (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpretation of the data, and (e) conclusions on the data. The data analysis process commences with the receipt of reviewed transcripts from participants. Apart from personally reading the data several times to understand the perspectives of the participants, I used NVivo software to organize the data. Ruggunan (2016) used NVivo to analyze data in the study of the South African labor market for officers in the Navy. Disassembling of the data is the process of coding, where the data are segmented and tagged. Fan and Niu (2016) used NVivo to analyze data from a study to examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of service recovery strategies using social media network. The process of coding the data helped to generate themes and identify patterns from the information. The use of qualitative analysis software assisted in managing large amounts of narrative data and enhanced the accuracy of my analysis. I used NVivo software to help in organizing the data. Fajinmi (2016) used NVivo to synthesize research data for the study on multinational corporations operating in the Nigeria. The last step of data analysis involved a scrutiny of the data and descriptions through a review of the codes drawing from the customer

satisfaction management system theory, the research question, and extant literature (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The term reliability refers to the quality of research findings. Reliability in a qualitative case study is a form of assurance of the dependability of the results through the research instrument from internal and external validity (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015). Dependability refers to how consistent the findings can be after repeating the same inquiry under a similar context (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

Researchers can achieve dependability through member checking, transcript review, and expert review of the interview scripts and protocols to confirm and validate their perspectives concerning the phenomenon (Jasper, Vaismoradi, Bondas, & Turunen, 2014). Noble and Smith (2015) noted that researchers could establish dependability through providing an *audit trail* of the methods and procedures for the study, including (a) purpose of the study, (b) procedure for selecting participants, and (c) process for data collection, coding, and analysis. I established an audit trail to track the research process. I also ensured member checking, and expert review of the interview scripts and protocols.

Validity

The validity and reliability of a study are ways to ensure transparency of the research study and reduce bias from the researcher (Singh, 2014). The notion of validity addresses the question ‘does this research process measure what it claims to measure?’

(Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Qualitative study validity refers to the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings.

Credibility refers to ensuring that the findings from the study are believable from the perspective of the participants in the research (Roulston & Shelton, 2015).

Researchers ensure the credibility of their research findings when they represent an accurate interpretation of human experiences to which people can relate (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015). To ensure credibility, I interviewed the participants adhering to the interview protocol, and spent adequate time in the interview process to gain a sound understanding of the case and meanings to the research question. I used member checking to ensure reliability and validity of data; after conducting the interview and transcribing the audio recording, I interpreted the transcription and share the interpretation with the participants to obtain feedback that may validate the data.

Transferability refers to how well researchers can apply the findings of a study to other studies involving a different population and similar context (Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). The transferability of this qualitative study findings may be determined by the readers and research users. Member checking and transcript review are two validation techniques used to improve the accuracy, credibility, reliability, and validity of a qualitative study (Crifo & Mottis, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). To enhance transferability of the study, I provided readers with a rich and detailed presentation of findings that included direct quotes from the participants. Ensuring a rich description of

the research contents and procedures of the research improves the transferability of the data (Spurlin & Garven, 2016).

The concept of transferability also creates opportunities for further studies and provides a platform for effective communication among researchers (Noble & Smith, 2015). I provided a rich and thorough description of the context of this study to provide sufficient insights that other researchers can consider when they are trying to transfer the research information to other populations or phenomena. I meticulously adhered to the data collection and analysis techniques proposed for this study, using the interview protocol (see Appendix B), and I conducted member checking until I reached data saturation.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research findings are free from bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Confirmability also relates to the objectivity and accuracy of data (Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers can enhance confirmability by asking probing follow-up questions during the interviews, member checking, asking questions from different perspectives, and triangulation (Singh, 2014). I documented all reflections regarding my personal experiences, culture, biases, and explanations that may inform and influence the research process. To ensure confirmability, I maintained objectivity, kept notes in a reflective journal, remained open to redirection from the dissertation committee, triangulated with available data, and used the NVivo data analysis software. Houghton et al. (2013) explained that confirmability promotes self-awareness of the study process and ensures that the researcher adheres to the research procedure.

Data saturation is the point at which participants provide no new themes, ideas, or viewpoints (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Data saturation is the point a researcher has all the relevant information to understand the phenomenon and no new insights emerge even if the number of participants increases (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used member checking until no new information emerged, to ensure data saturation. Tran et al. (2016) used resampling methods to determine the point of data saturation in surveys using open-ended questions.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I restated the purpose of the research study and discussed my role as the researcher. I presented a description of the proposed research method and design, outlining the reasoning for the selection of a qualitative multiple case study to explore the phenomenon of customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers. I discussed the population and sampling, ethical considerations, data collection instruments and analysis, and reliability and validity of the data from the proposed study. In Section 3, I presented the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data from the study. I also discussed the application of the research to professional practice, the implications for social change, recommendation for action, suggestions for social change, reflections and concluding statements.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 contains the findings from this study on customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers. Specifically, this section includes an overview of the research, the results from collecting and analyzing the data, application of the study to professional practice, and the implications of the study for social change. Furthermore, this section includes recommendations for action based on my research findings, suggestions for further research, my reflection on the doctoral process, and a conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. I interviewed three business leaders from the service industry in the southern part of Nigeria who have demonstrated experience on the phenomenon of developing and implementing satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers. Each of the participants received and completed a consent form after understanding the purpose of the research, the voluntary and confidential nature of participation, and their rights to participate and or withdraw. Using the interview protocol, the participants responded to eight open-ended semistructured interview questions (Appendix B), which I transcribed and shared with the participants to validate. I also used NVivo 11 software to facilitate data analysis and accuracy in the coding and separation of data into themes. The three themes that emerged from the analyzed data were: (a) positive brand image creation, (b) social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction, and (c) quality service and timely delivery increased Generation Y customers' satisfaction.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What customer satisfaction strategies do business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers? The participants in the study were leaders with experiences drawn from various segments of the service industry, namely (a) the banking industry, (b) the entertainment industry, and (c) the hospitality industry. Two of the participants are responsible for their organization's national business development and strategy implementation, while the third manages a self-owned hospitality business with branch offices in Akwa Ibom state. All the participants had over 10 years of experience. To enhance confidentiality and privacy, I used codes ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3 to label the data transcription and identify the participants in the study; where ED1A1 represented participant 1, ED1A2 represented participant 2, and ED1A3 represented participant 3. The duration of each interview was approximately 35 minutes and an additional 15 minutes for member checking and validation. Coding the collected data using NVivo was suitable for identifying and organizing the data (Weber, Geneste, & Connell, 2015). The results of the data analysis revealed the following themes: (a) positive brand image creation, (b) social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction, and (c) quality service and timely delivery increased Generation Y customers' satisfaction. The conceptual framework for exploring the overarching research question of this qualitative multiple case study was the theory of customer satisfaction management system (CSMS). The findings from the study aligned with the conceptual framework and the results of the literature review.

Theme 1: Positive Brand Image Creation

The first theme that emerged from the analyzed data was positive brand image creation. All the business leaders agreed on the importance of creating a positive brand image to retain Generation Y customers. The three business leaders mentioned that Generation Y customers are comfortable with brands that they trust. ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, emphasized the importance of creating a positive brand image and how Generation Y customers identified with brands that were trendy and dependable. ED1A1 stated, “Generation Y customers are quick to conclude on a brand as being old or outdated, so we always try to refresh our brand regarding the image, look and feel, and try to talk their talk.” Likewise, ED1A3, from the banking industry, noted that the process of creating a positive brand image helped in positioning their company within the younger generation of customers. ED1A3 remarked, “Our organization is close to 100 years old, so our goal was to recreate our brand into an entirely new brand that says we are the institution of tomorrow.” ED1A2 from the hospitality industry inferred that young people are attracted to positively looking visual images; they are concerned about how products are packaged and presented because it boosts their self-image. From the comments of the business leaders, creating a positive brand image emerged as a theme from descriptions of the efforts made to enhance the perception and value of their brand in the minds of Generation Y customers.

ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3 fostered their brands through the combination of physical and virtual brand elements such as product features, package features, service quality, ambience, color schemes, promotional items, nature of facilities, and website

content to create desired positive impressions in the minds of Generation Y customers. ED1A2, from the hospitality industry, explained that they focused on the color schemes, package features, and ambience because they observed that Generation Y customers preferred to relate to brands that could help boost their identity or self-esteem. Likewise, ED1A3, from the banking industry, noted that the deliberate fine-tuning of their brand image included the choice of the product label and features, color schemes, office branding, and website content to position the company and retain Generation Y customers. The leaders' assertions align with the findings of Rudawska (2014) who revealed that 90% of Generation Y customers have an emotional attitude toward brands.

To execute the strategy of creating a positive brand image, ED1A2, in the hospitality business, reported having engaged a brand expert to ensure the company optimized the benefits of branding. Accordingly, ED1A2 stated, "I had to hire an expert in trying to build a positive brand image to project my company to my target customers (Generation Y)." ED1A3, from the banking industry, commented that the organization carried out some key changes including a realignment of the organizational structure, remodeling of the branch offices, and redesigning of products, which helped in creating a positive brand image and retaining Generation Y customers. ED1A3 explained, "We realized that we wanted to be very active in engaging Generation Y customers, we had to amend our organizational structure by setting up a dedicated unit that came up with a game plan aimed at Generation Y customers." ED1A3 further stated:

We had a full re-branding of all our offices nationwide, painting our offices with new colors to reflect our new image. For offices that were

close to, or within school campuses, we paid special attention to the customization. We also came up with a lounge with Wi-Fi access, where students could relax; displaying our products to reflect the positive brand images of our products.

ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, used the term *brand-targeting* to describe how they modified elements of their brand image to create a positive impression among Generation Y customers. ED1A1 remarked:

You know every brand has a brand compass. What we did to make our brand portray a positive image was to tweak the brand compass by making it more appealing to Generation Y. It could be the wordings, the colors of promotional gift items, effigies or a combination of all of them. It also means that in trying to appeal to Generation Y customers, you need to identify the element or features that connect with the attributes you are trying to align your brand with.

The impact of creating a positive brand image was effective in retaining Generation Y customers, as reported by the three business leaders. ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, highlighted an ease in connecting with Generation Y customers who enthusiastically accepted and flaunted the organization's promotional items. ED1A2, from the hospitality industry, stated that Generation Y customers were not only impressed with the company's packaging but also proudly identified with the brand and willingly referred the company to their peers. Likewise, ED1A3, from the banking industry, stated that during their product campaigns at campuses, many students signed

up and some students even offered to enlist as brand ambassadors for their organization at no cost. The findings align with Saaksjarui, Hellen, and Balabanis' (2016) suggestion that the positive attributes of a brand image significantly influence Generation Y customer's perception of the products and the organization.

The analysis of the participating companies' corporate strategy based on information available on the websites, and 2016 audited financial reports revealed statements such as "creating an enduring brand that would outlive generations," "high-quality brand," "positive image," and "next generation products." Words used to describe the brand logo include "distinctive, simple, elegant, vibrant, memorable, energy, bold, innovativeness, and excitement." The information from the above-mentioned sources suggests that the companies' strategies were aimed at creating visibility among Generation Y customers by projecting a positive brand image that was trendy, youthful, vibrant, and reliable. Although the information did not indicate if the strategy was exclusively for Generation Y customers or to the broad category of youths, the participants explained that Generation Y customers were an intrinsic part of the customer satisfaction and retention strategy. The explanation was that Generation Y customers were the legally eligible working class among the youths because they currently (2018) fall within the age range of 18 to 38 years.

The participants' views on creating a positive brand image were similar to findings from the literature review. Chinomona (2016) stated that positive brand image is the consumer's mental picture of the offering of a firm's product or services, which includes symbolic meanings that consumers associate with the specific attributes of the

product or services. Ordun (2015) identified factors such as the trend; prestige, brand, and excellent service are some elements of positive brand images that influence the decisions of members of Generation Y cohort. Chen, Chang, and Chang (2016) stated that Generation Y customers often based their decision to buy a product on the positive image of the brand.

The findings from Theme 1 aligned with the conceptual framework for the study in relation to brand image creation. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) argued that the focus of customer satisfaction management systems involves (a) repositioning and enhancing brand image, (b) enriching an organization's reputation, and (c) preserving the future value of a business. By creating a positive brand image, business leaders are promoting their organization's brand as the ideal choice for Generation Y customers, which in turn boosts the company's reputation. Through the design of product features, package features, office ambience, color schemes, promotional items, and website content, the participants were able to create the desired positive brand impressions in the minds of Generation Y customers for their organizations.

Theme 2: Social Media as an Enabler of Generation Y Customer Satisfaction

The second theme that emerged was social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction. All three participants affirmed that with social media, they had gained access to the world of the Generation Y customers who are tech-savvy and often described as digital natives. The leaders explained that, as an enabler, social media platforms facilitated effective communication and helped to build trust with Generation Y customers. The business leaders also noted that social media was useful for assessing

Generation Y customers' satisfaction with the organization's products and services.

ED1A3, from the banking industry, explained that the social media platform supported continuous business improvement and collaboration with Generation Y customers.

ED1A2 also underscored the importance of social media platforms and remarked: "Using the social media has been undoubtedly very helpful in gauging the performance of our products and services, and staying close to Generation Y customers." Arnaboldi, Azzone, and Sidorova (2017) described social media as a dynamic internet platform with the ability to support online and real-time interaction between firm and client. This component of the theme on the importance of social media platforms support findings of Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) that businesses use social media to prize competition, announce new products and services, interact with clients, provide advice to clients, and provide useful information to resolve customer service issues.

The participants explained that the use of social media supported direct means of communication and provided a platform that encouraged the involvement and participation of Generation Y customers. ED1A3, from the banking industry, explained that the social media platform was useful in anticipating Generation Y customer's experience, provided access to a broader pool of customers, and served as a guide in the development of products and services. ED1A3 stated:

Our goal was to meet them (Generation Y customers) in the digital space. We realized that most times they are on social media, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They are always there, so what we did then was to ask how we leverage and play our bit to attract and retain these customers.

Furthermore, ED1A1 noted: "...using the social media has been undoubtedly very helpful in engaging Generation Y customers and marketing..." The findings in this theme about the importance of social media as a tool for accessing Generation Y customers reinforces the work of Lissitsa and Kol (2016), who noted information technology (social media) as a viable platform to connect with Generation Y customers.

A review of the websites to determine what social media platforms the participants' organization use revealed that Facebook was common to all participants' companies. The website of ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, had the most social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus, LinkedIn, and YouTube while the website of ED1A2, from the hospitality industry, had only Facebook. The interviewees also argued that because interaction on their organization's online live chat menu was low, they had to explore other social media platforms to gain access to Generation Y customers.

The leaders also differed slightly in their social media strategies and the degree of reliance. For instance, ED1A2, from the hospitality industry, reported that the organization's focus is to receive customer feedback. ED1A2 stated, "We regularly get feedback from our target market (Millennials) which enables us to adjust our processes to fit their needs." ED1A2 further explained that because the company operates in Akwa Ibom and a few other states in the southern part of Nigeria, the business model was to encourage one-on-one contact with clients as a follow up to the feedback to ensure quality service delivery in all transactions.

ED1A1 and ED1A3, both from the entertainment and banking industry, noted that Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook were very helpful in engaging Generation Y customers and promoting sales. ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, stated:

Another thing that has worked for us is the social media; selling your product through social media using Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. If I were to rate our success on a scale of 1 to 10, I would say 9.

On his part, ED1A3, from the banking industry, commented that the use of social media allowed for innovation, improved communication, and referral from Generation Y customers. He shared his thoughts:

What we did was to set up a Facebook account, where you can open a bank account on our Facebook page. This initiative happened like three years back. People asked why somebody would go to Facebook to open an account. We explained, if you spend most of your idle time in Facebook and you have the choice of opening an account and of been engaged with your service provider on Facebook, then that will be an option. We gained a lot of mileage with this initiative.

The participants' views on social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction are similar to the findings of Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016), who identified the benefits of using social media to include (a) facilitating relationship building with clients, (b) broader access to customers, (c) brand awareness, and (d) boost sales. ED1A3, from the banking industry, underscores Floreddu and Cabiddu's (2016) finding by attributing their organization's success in retaining Generation Y customers to the use of

social media in projecting their brand, taking their services to a wider pool of customers, and creating the necessary platform for interaction that boosted customer patronage. Arnaboldi et al. (2017) also revealed that the interaction between clients and firms through social media platforms lead to an enhanced relationship with customers, brand awareness, and increased customer engagement. In addition, statements of the business strategy found on the companies' websites such as "developing products with the help of stakeholders in dialogue," and "making a deliberate effort to understand target customers intimately" indicates a strategy aimed at improving customer interaction. The respondents also highlighted some prominent subthemes resulting from the use of social media: (a) continuous engagement, (b) feedback, and (c) co-creation.

Continuous engagement. The first subtheme that emerged in the social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction theme was continuous engagement. Analyzing the data collected from ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3 revealed that continuous engagement fostered satisfaction and retention of Generation Y customers. All the participants noted that they had to adopt engagement as a strategy because Generation Y customers were inclined to be fickle and impatient. ED1A2 explained that Generation Y customers could easily dump a brand or product impulsively; without any consultation, complaint or feedback. Likewise, ED1A3 stated, "These groups of people (Generation Y) are not particularly loyal. You constantly need to engage them to know what's on their minds, to understand their expectations and satisfy them." The leaders' assertion aligns with Harwood and Garry's (2015) argument that customer engagement is useful in understanding and managing interactions between organizations and customers.

The business leaders differed slightly in their approaches to continuous engagement. For instance, ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, used an experiential process comprising visual and verbal expressions in communication, and product affiliation to cast an impression in the mind of the target customers. ED1A1 stated:

We had to use a top-of-mind awareness approach to keep Generation Y customers hooked to the brand; you need to continue the pitch, engage and not leave the customer unattended. The experiential part of it refers to making them experience the essence of your brand, create an image, create exhibitions, make them feel special; give them promotional items, allowing them to experience the brand.

ED1A3, from the banking industry, explained that the process of continuous engagement involved conducting product awareness campaigns on school campuses, scheduling online live chat fora with customers, and encouraging Generation Y customers' feedback through social media platforms. The participants' views on the importance of continuous engagement to satisfying and retaining Generation Y customers are similar to the findings of Maslowska, Malthouse, and Collinger (2016), who revealed that customer engagement involves a dynamic set of interrelationships between the customer and an organization in an ecosystem facilitated by social media platforms.

The participants noted continuous engagement was helpful in building relationships with Generation Y customers. The leaders explained that the relationship with Generation Y customers improved because of an increased level of involvement and participation of customers because of continuous engagement. The finding echoes results

obtained by Celuch, Robinson, and Walsh (2015), and Wepener and Boshoff (2015), who revealed that service-oriented organizations use continuous engagement as a tool for getting customers involved with the organization, and to discover what the customer knows that may contribute to service improvement and customer satisfaction. ED1A3 further explained that relationships built through continuous engagement allowed for easy adoption, interaction, and more referrals from Generation Y customers. More directly, Naumann et al. (2017) believed that engaged customers display higher levels of commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction.

Feedback. The second subtheme that emerged in the social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction theme was feedback. The leaders discussed extensively on the importance of feedback to satisfying and retaining Generation Y customers. ED1A2 noted that "customer feedback enabled the organization to identify areas to effect changes." ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, reported Generation Y customers often provided feedback because they want products or services that suit their personality. ED1A1 explained:

Generation Y individuals want more automation, are very impatient, want recognition, and like trendy things. Through their feedback, you can align functional benefits of your products that makes them belong and feel connected to their peers or the latest trends.

All three participants (ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3) opined feedback was useful in assessing the performance and quality of products and services. ED1A3 remarked, "while we had created an online platform for easy usage, we also carefully monitored the

reviews from users to ensure the right content was always present to keep customers engaged." ED1A3 also noted that getting feedback from Generation Y customers through social media platforms was a continuous process. The participants agreed that customer feedback was helpful in projecting the organization as flexible and in tune with Generation Y customers. The participants' views concerning the role of feedback in projecting organizational flexibility and attunement to Generation Y customers are similar to the findings of Ashley and Tuten's (2015), who discovered customer feedback plays a central role in customer relationships and fits into strategies for continuous improvement of customer satisfaction in organizations.

The leaders claimed the use of customer feedback helped in managing the perception of Generation Y customers who would rather trust the reviews of peers on the social media platforms than authorized publications from organizations. The participants also noted that because the information reviewers shared on the social media platforms are not censored, feedback from customers may also potentially misinform, mislead, or create a wrong perception. The opinion of the leaders on feedback agrees with the findings of Jaakkola and Alexander (2014), who opined that customer feedback involves interactive customer relationships which may result in positive or negative feedbacks. Kim, Chio, and Verma (2017) also revealed positive feedback is the report from the customer on what the organization does well while negative feedback is to highlight areas that fall below expectations. The leaders maintained that addressing both negative and positive feedback was important in managing the perception of Generation Y customers. The interviewees agreed that the process of managing customer perception through

feedback included early detection of customers' concerns, prompt resolution of the complaints, and providing updates on all issues through the social media platforms.

Co-creation. The last subtheme that emerged in the social media as an enabler of Generation Y customer satisfaction theme was co-creation. ED1A1 and ED1A3 from the entertainment and banking industries identified co-creation as essential for satisfying Generation Y customers. The leaders described co-creation as the process of getting customer input in the design of products or services. The leaders evaluated that co-creation results in more acceptable products, and a sense of collective ownership and pride among Generation Y customers. The participants' views on co-creation are similar to the findings of Preikschas, Cabanelas, Rudiger, and Lampon (2017), who concluded that co-creation helps business leaders to place customers as co-owners, co-creators of value, brand advocates, and emotionally loyal customers.

The leaders fostered co-creation by encouraging collaboration with Generation Y customers during engagement and feedback sessions. For instance, ED1A3 stated, "we organized live sessions to talk about our products and encourage ideas from customers on improvements to make on existing products and identify opportunities for new products." Likewise, ED1A1 indicated that social media platform acts as an inclusion mechanism that facilitates collaboration with the Generation Y customers in the design and development of products. The leaders' assertion reinforced the findings of Straker and Wrigley (2016), who showed that organizations co-create value through the intersection of people, business, and technology (social media).

The statements found on the companies' websites suggest a willingness to co-create with customers. Statements such as "developing products with the help of stakeholders," and "a desire to understand and partner with target customers intimately" indicates a strategy aimed at improving satisfaction through collaboration and co-creation with Generation Y customers. The leaders' discovered that collaborating with Generation Y customers to co-create products and services requires patience, good listening, and flexibility to understand customer behavior. Price, Wrigley, and Straker (2015) confirmed that understanding customer behavior was beneficial to co-creating value. In relation to the conceptual framework, the findings from this theme align with Kobylanski and Pawlowska's (2012) posit on the relevance of technological (social media) platforms for business improvement in the theory of customer satisfaction management system.

Theme 3: Quality Service and Timely Delivery Increased Generation Y Customers' Satisfaction

The third theme that emerged was quality service and timely delivery increased Generation Y customers' satisfaction. All participants agreed on the importance of quality service and timely delivery as critical to satisfying and retaining Generation Y customers. ED1A1, ED1A2, and ED1A3 mentioned that Generation Y customers appreciate good quality products that organizations deliver promptly. The leaders noted that emphasis on quality service and timely delivery might be because Generation Y customers are very knowledgeable about what they want, have a good taste for quality, fickle, and impatient. The participants' views on quality service and timely delivery are similar to the findings of Straker and Wrigley (2016), who concluded that Generation Y customers are more

informed, interconnected, rarely loyal, and more demanding in the quality and speed of delivery of products and services than their predecessor generations (Baby boomers and Generation X).

ED1A1 and ED1A2 explained that their understanding of the behavioral attributes of Generation Y customers influenced the steps taken to ensuring quality service and timely delivery. ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, underscored this argument by sharing from an experience of a dismal product launch where they introduced a product developed abroad by their sister company without customizing the product to fit the attributes and preferences of Generation Y customers locally. According to ED1A1, "we had a disappointing outing because customers quickly abandoned the product because of the time spent in trying to understand and use the product." Likewise, ED1A2 explained Generation Y customers are inclined to look beyond the attractiveness of promotional items or discounts but are more interested in the intrinsic value of a product and its delivery. He stated, "Generation Y customers are not swayed by freebies when the service is not of good quality. Poor quality service is even made worse by unnecessary delays." The findings connect with the research by Guillet and Kucukusta (2016), who showed that understanding customer behavior is relevant to delivering quality service to satisfy customers.

The participants described how quality service and timely delivery led to Generation Y customers' satisfaction and retention. ED1A3, from the banking industry, explained that to ensure quality service and timely delivery they had to design simplified and less expensive products that customers could access online. He stated, "We

developed cost-effective bundle products for the students in the universities to attract and retain customers. In doing this, we simplified the long forms into a concise document that was simple and straight to the point." Likewise, ED1A2 from the hospitality industry stated that extra care was taken to ensure the quality of products and service levels were consistent and prompt. He said, "for you to acquire, maintain and grow that demographic customer segment (Generation Y), you have to always be at your best regarding quality and time in service delivery." Keisidou, Sarigiannidis, Maditinos, and Thalassinou (2013) revealed that service quality had strong connections with and serves as a substantial measure of customer satisfaction. Both ED1A1 and ED1A3 noted that careful attention to staff recruitment, training, and development was critical to delivering quality service and in a timely manner. This study findings on employee input in the delivery of quality service echo the results obtained by Coussement (2014), who found that product knowledge increases the salesperson confidence and proficiency in delivering quality and prompt service. Keisidou et al. (2013) also showed that quality service provided timely requires significant employee input.

The respondents also provided insights about ways they ensured quality service to satisfy Generation Y customers. The leaders identified adherence to internal service level standards and controls, employee empowerment, and customer feedback as some of the ways to ensure service quality. ED1A3 said that in the bank, to ensure quality service, they invested in simplifying some internal procedures to provide efficient operations, set minimum turnaround time for processes, and reviewed customer feedback daily. ED1A2, from the hospitality industry, stated that they empowered the supervisors to act as quality

control officers and to enforce compliance. ED1A1, from the entertainment industry, noted that the organization focused on the quality of people employed, and encouraged entrepreneurial behavior among employees in responding to customer feedback. He also stated that apart from using quality control metrics to ensure the products and services were of acceptable standards, reemphasizing the organization's commitment to quality service to customers helped in boosting customer satisfaction. ED1A2 remarked:

Our strategy is not to focus only on the services we render but to also emphasize our promise to service quality and showcase the benefits of our services to the customers. For instance, we focused on the benefit of using a non-toxic and eco-friendly cleaning solvent for dry-cleaning, which our customers appreciated because of the extra effort taken to providing a healthier quality output that was also safer to the environment.

The leaders' assertion is similar to the findings of Matthews, Son, and Watchravesringkan (2014), who concluded that the requirements for companies to sustain quality service include (a) open communication with their clients, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) employing competent and qualified personnel.

The leaders explained that quality service and timely delivery resulted in more customer referrals and sales from satisfied Generation Y customers. ED1A2 stated:

When quality standards are consistent, customers are confident and can readily recommend us to their peers. Generation Y customers tend to believe the reviews from their peers more than any marketing pitch. Once they are happy with your

brand, they discuss their experience within their social media network, and you are sure to have increased patronage.

The evidence of positive peer reviews producing increased patronage aligns with the findings of Ziqiong, Zili, and Rob (2013), who showed satisfied customers provide positive word-of-mouth referrals, and repeat future purchases, which leads to increased future revenue of the business. ED1A3, from the banking industry, explained that the simplification of their products and ease of accessing the products through Facebook enhanced service delivery, which boosted customer acquisition and retention. This explanation of product simplification and access enhancement resulting in increased customer base and retention echoes findings of Hosseini, Zadeh, and Bideh (2013), who discovered service quality affects customer satisfaction and increase sales, and with Kobylanski and Pawlowska's (2012) theory of customer satisfaction management system wherein increasing new product credibility impacts customer satisfaction and business improvement. Alvarez-Garcia, Rio-Rama, and Simonetti (2017) also showed that customer satisfaction is a critical factor in improving organizational competitiveness and productivity.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Customer satisfaction management systems (CSMS) is a customer satisfaction theory that incorporates continuous improvement for businesses (Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012; McCrory, Pilcher, & McMillan, 2017). Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) posited that CSMS involves approaches to customer satisfaction that incorporates continuous improvement for businesses. Gizaw and Pagidimarri (2014) noted that CSMS

is useful in measuring the value of a strategic focus on customer satisfaction that might result in a competitive advantage for business sustainability. Alvarez-Garcia, Rio-Rama, and Simonetti (2017) also emphasized customer satisfaction as a key factor in management that helps to improve organizational competitiveness and productivity. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) argued that the focus of customer satisfaction management systems involves (a) repositioning and enhancing brand image, (b) enriching an organization's reputation, and (c) preserving the future value of a business, (d) increase in stock price, (e) increasing the credibility of new products development, and (f) examining the reality of a connection with stakeholder return.

The findings from Theme 1 align with the conceptual framework for the study in relation to brand image creation. Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) argued that the focus of customer satisfaction management systems involves (a) repositioning and enhancing brand image, (b) enriching an organization's reputation, and (c) preserving the future value of a business. By creating a positive brand image, business leaders are promoting their organization's brand as the ideal choice for Generation Y customers, which in turn boosts the company's reputation. Through the design of product features, package features, office ambience, choice of color schemes, promotional items, and website content, the participants were able to create the desired positive brand impressions in the minds of Generation Y customers for their organizations.

Analysis of the data from Theme 2 underscores the relevance of technological platforms in the conceptual framework. In relation to Kobylanski and Pawlowska's (2012) theory on customer satisfaction management systems, the use of technological

platforms in implementing customer satisfaction strategies for continuous business improvement can aid in (a) enriching an organization's reputation, and (b) preserving the future value of a business. The findings from the study showed that by using social media platforms, business leaders gained access to a wider pool of customers, boosted brand awareness, and developed stronger ties with Generation Y customers, which was helpful in fostering the reputation of the organization and growing the number of retained customers for long-term sustainability.

The results of Theme 3 align with the conceptual framework in relation to acceptance of an organization's products and services. In the theory of customer satisfaction management systems, Kobylanski and Pawlowska (2012) noted that one of the objectives of customer satisfaction strategies for business improvement is to increase the credibility of new products and services. An analysis of the study findings showed that to earn credibility from Generation Y customers, who are known to be knowledgeable, interconnected, informed, impatient and demanding, business leaders ensured consistent quality service and timely delivery, which resulted in high customer referrals, more acquired and retained customers, and increased sales revenue. The review of the *business strategy* and *investor relations* sections of the participant websites supported the participant responses suggesting outcomes of improved customer satisfaction, which included customer referrals, more customer acquisitions, and increased sales revenue were achieved within the subject organizations.

Applications to Professional Practice

The business implications of satisfying and retaining Generation Y customers are numerous. I conducted this study to explore the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers in Nigeria. The leader interviews, documents reviewed, and extant literature provided insight into some of the strategies in use. The study findings will provide business leaders, managers, and professionals with some information enabling them to gain a better understanding of what and how customer satisfaction strategies can help to retain Generation Y customers. The applications to professional practice include: providing insight into how to evaluate the suitability of brand image regarding the perception of Generation Y customers; enhancing customer engagement strategy development through exploitation of strategies to optimize other spin-off benefits; and, enhancing service delivery credibility.

First, the findings from this study will afford business leaders insight into how to evaluate the suitability of their brand image regarding the perception of Generation Y customers. The results showed that a positive brand impression is helpful in fostering emotional connection and acceptance of an organization's products and services by Generation Y customers, which in turn, boosts the organization's reputation. Saaksjarui, Hellen, and Balabanis' (2016) stated that the positive attributes of a brand image significantly influence Generation Y customer's perception of the products and the organization.

Second, in developing customer engagement strategies, business leaders might consider exploiting these strategies to optimize other spin-off benefits like trust building,

a sense of co-ownership and collaboration, and emotional loyalty with customers. The findings showed that the use of social media platforms provided access to a broader pool of customers, enhanced relationship with Generation Y customers, facilitated the management of customer feedback, promoted brand awareness, and encouraged collaboration with customers. Arnaboldi et al. (2017) also revealed that the interaction between the client and firm through social media lead to an improved relationship with customers, brand awareness, and increased sales revenue.

Another contribution of this research to professional practice relates to credibility in service delivery. The results revealed that consistent quality standards, efficient service delivery, empowered employees and an audacious commitment to quality service by organizations improved customer satisfaction, referral, and retention, and increased sales revenue. Ziqiong, Zili, and Rob (2013), who showed that satisfied customers provide positive word-of-mouth referrals, and repeat future purchases, which leads to increased future revenue of the business.

The cost of implementing the findings of this study may be minimal compared to the benefits of satisfying and retaining the economically robust population of Generation Y customers. Organizations with a large pool of satisfied and loyal customers tend to have a long-term competitive advantage over their competition and are more likely to sustain their profitability over a more extended period (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Through applying the strategies identified in this study, of brand image evaluation, enhanced customer engagement strategy, and enhanced service delivery credibility,

business leaders may improve the business performance and long-term sustainability of their organization.

Implications for Social Change

The inability of some business leaders in Nigeria to retain Generation Y customers has resulted in a loss of revenue, which may affect the profitability of the business, low potential for employment opportunities, and negative impact on the society (Adebayo, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. Understanding how leaders in the service industry have used customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers may help other business leaders develop a competitive advantage for long-term sustainability (Anderson & Ulla, 2014). Organizations with a large pool of satisfied and loyal customers tend to have a lower cost of acquiring and maintaining customers, enjoy free referrals, and are more likely to sustain their profitability over a more extended period (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015).

Apart from job security for employees, which is a direct result of the profitability of businesses, improvement in profitability also creates employment opportunities for more people, and in turn, an enhanced standard of living (Adebayo, 2013). Profitable businesses can contribute to building the communities and society in a variety of ways because profitable enterprises are more willing to participate in social responsibilities such as donating to local schools and charities, and serving in community organizations (Weber, Diaz, & Schwegler, 2014). Successful businesses also pay various tax remittances to the local, state and federal governments, which could enable government

entities to improve public infrastructures for the benefit of the larger community (Heinonen, 2014).

Recommendations for Action

The subject of customer satisfaction and retention is crucial because of its several implications for businesses, employees, and communities (Chuah, Marimuthu, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2017). I have three recommendations for action. The first recommendation is that leaders periodically evaluate, through continuous interaction and engagement with customers, how their organization's systems and procedures are organized to guarantee quality service and timely delivery. The study findings indicated business leaders who periodically evaluate their organization's system and processes to ensure quality service and timely delivery experience more satisfied customers, and increased company revenue.

Second, leaders should devise clear strategies to consistently interact with Generation Y customers to build trust and win their loyalty. The study findings showed that business leaders using robust strategies to continuously engage customers have more satisfied customers and sales revenues because they are better at understanding, managing and anticipating the needs of Generation Y customers. My third recommendation is for business leaders to develop an entrepreneurial mindset in designing their unique customer satisfaction strategies for the dynamic marketplace. The study findings revealed a situational context within the customer satisfaction strategies such that merely copying the strategy used by a company in an industry may not suffice.

Business leaders should identify their unique strengths or competitive advantage that would enhance their customer satisfaction strategies.

To disseminate the findings of this study, I will share the results of the study with the participants. I will also share the results with the Akwa Ibom Chambers of Commerce and other chambers of commerce in Nigeria, for their members. I also intend to disseminate this research study in small business training seminars in Akwa Ibom and other parts of Nigeria. Finally, I plan to publish the study to achieve a broader reach in sharing the findings with business leaders across industries and other parts of the world.

Recommendations for Further Research

I used a qualitative multiple case study to explore the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers. The limitations of this study are: (a) the geographical location, (b) the number of participants, and (c) the research design. The location for this study, which is Akwa Ibom, in the southern part of Nigeria, does not represent the entire perspective and insights into the strategies for retaining Generation Y customers. I propose three recommendations for future research.

The first recommendation is for future researchers to cover a more expansive geographical location. A more extensive geographical area would enable current study findings to be generalized to other geographical areas. In the study conducted by Leckie, Nyadzayo, and Johnson (2016), the researchers underscored the need to study a more extensive geographical area and noted that customer satisfaction and retention has broad application across various sectors that cannot be defined by any single geographical location.

Second, researchers interested in advancing this study could consider increasing the number of participants to accommodate views from a broader spectrum of people than the three business leaders selected for this study. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) noted that the quality of the data in a study is enhanced when the researcher explores a case extensively. Finally, to improve the generalizability of the findings and enable business leaders to determine the impact of any of the strategies on Generation Y customer retention, quantitative researchers can examine the influence of the customer satisfaction strategies identified from this study on the retention of Generation Y customers.

Reflections

My experience from the doctoral journey has been very instructive and illuminating. The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process provided the required platform for introspection on my personality, which enabled me to connect my worldview to my passions and my choice of a research topic. I explored the customer satisfaction strategies business leaders use to retain Generation Y customers.

I have come to appreciate the entire research process and respect the commitment to excellence in the research procedure. I also gained experience and knowledge on how to conduct research ethically, and to overcome my personal bias by relying on the perspectives of the participants for the study. Despite the seeming challenges, my learnings from the entire process including the interview and member checking sessions provided an appreciation on the relevance of crafting sound business strategies for long-term sustainability. Customer trends are dynamic, and business leaders need to evolve effective engagement strategies to optimize the inherent opportunities.

Conclusion

Previous researchers found a positive relationship between service quality (Choudhury, 2014), customer satisfaction (Kaura, 2013), customer loyalty (Chodzaza & Gombachika, 2013), and firm performance (Choudhury, 2014). However, few have focused on Generation Y customers despite the robust economic potentials of this cohort. Using a calculated approach to customer satisfaction that incorporates continuous improvement for businesses is an essential consideration in the theory of customer satisfaction management system (Alvarez-Garcia, Rio-Rama, & Simonetti, 2017; Kobylanski & Pawlowska, 2012). However, the effectiveness of customer satisfaction strategies to retaining Generation Y customers for long-term business sustainability is not clear (Gizaw & Pagidimarri, 2014).

The findings from this qualitative multiple case study revealed that positive brand image, social media, continuous engagement, feedback, co-creation, quality service and timely delivery all improved the retention of Generation Y customers. Using data collected from leaders in the banking, entertainment, and hospitality industry and document review, I found that business leaders need to enhance the satisfaction of Generation Y customers to improve customer retention, and in turn, competitive advantage. The findings of this study also underscore the results of prior research by Kandampully, Zhang, and Bilgihan (2015), who identified branding, engagement, feedback, and co-creation as emerging areas to build customer satisfaction strategies.

The results of the study are essential because they relate to the broad concepts of customer satisfaction and retention, which is relevant to business leaders across several

industries. The importance of the research supports the fact that customer retention correlates with the long-term sustainability of businesses. Effective customer satisfaction strategies may lead to sustainable enterprises, regarding; sustained profitability, increased loyalty and long-term customer retention, improved firm reputation and enhanced sustainability (Abram, Picard, Navarro, & Piolino, 2014). However, business leaders should also realize that customer satisfaction strategies are not sacrosanct; they are dynamic tools shaped by a combination of an organization's internal processes, customer changing behavior and the macroeconomic environment.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam,

I invite you to take part in a research study that relates to customer satisfaction strategies for sustainable business growth. I am Edmund Otaigbe, a doctoral student at Walden University. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Business Administration degree, I am conducting a research study on “*exploring satisfaction and retention strategies for Generation Y customers*”. I am inviting business leaders in the service industry with at least 3 years of experience in implementing strategies for the acquisition, engagement, satisfaction and retention of Generation Y customers (or youths) for their organizations, to be a part of this study. Based on your experience and involvement in the implementation of segmented customer engagement strategies, I am asking for your participation in this study.

I will conduct one-on-one interview that may take up 30-60 minutes of your time, on a date and time that is convenient for you. The interview process will also include a follow up meeting to share the initial study findings, and seek your opinion about the data collection process, interpretation, and findings.

If you decide to participate in my study, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will send you an informed consent form that you can either reply by email with the words’ I consent” or you can append your signature on the physical copy of the informed consent form. The informed consent form provides a brief overview of the study and outlines your rights as a participant. Your participation in this study is

voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may withdraw at any time from the study. Any information you provide will be confidential. I will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research.

This invitation is to elicit your interest to participate in the research. Please confirm if you would like to be a part of this study.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Edmund Otaigbe

Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant Code: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Interview Mode: Face-to-face _____ Telephone _____

Guidance notes:

- Explain the purpose of the study to the participant.
- Retrieve signed informed consent forms
- Write the label assigned to the participant on top of the interview sheet to ensure confidentiality.
- Audio record the interview and assign same label to identify the data.
- Watch for non-verbal queues
- Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth information
- Wrap up interview thanking participant

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What strategies did you use to satisfy the Generation Y customers in your organization?
2. How were these strategies useful in satisfying Generation Y customers?
3. What strategies have you found least helpful in satisfying Generation Y customers?

4. In what ways has your customer satisfaction strategies assisted in retaining Generation Y customers?
5. What strategies do you use to increase the acceptance of your products or services by Generation Y customers?
6. How have you positioned or enhanced your brand image to retain Generation Y customers?
7. In what ways have your operating systems and procedures been adapted to retain Generation Y customers?
8. What additional information would you like to add to customer satisfaction strategies to retain Generation Y customers?

Schedule follow-up member checking interview

Participant Code: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Interview Mode: Face-to-face _____ Telephone _____

Guidance notes:

- Share copy of succinct synthesis for each question in the interview
- Bring in probing questions related to other related information found
- Walk through each question, read the interpretation and ask:
 - Did I miss anything? Or,
 - What would you like me to add?

Appendix E: Protecting Human Research Participants

