

## Research Article

### Achievement of Strategic ICT Business Objectives through Customer Retention in a Ghanaian Telecommunications Company

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to assess the impact of customer retention on the achievement of strategic ICT business objectives at Airtel Ghana Limited, a telecommunications company in Ghana. Customer retention plays a critical role in enhancing Airtel's strategic objectives. We discuss the factors that increase customer retention rate; which include customer care, customer satisfaction, service quality and commitment of staff. We used questionnaires to collect data from the staff of the customer unit, who are directly in charge of customer service, customer retention and marketing. The quantitative method was used for data analysis. The main findings of the study were that customer retention strategies existed for Airtel Ghana and that management was committed to implementing these strategies and that these strategies contributed significantly to the achievement of Airtel Ghana Limited's business objectives. Although challenges existed, management was keen to overcome them because of the expected benefits of customer retention. These include increase in customer base, customer loyalty and profitability. We recommended that more effort be put in by management of Airtel Ghana to arrest the challenges by providing effective systems and funds when required, adequate IT support, reduction in management approval level bureaucracies and adequate staffing for the customer retention unit.

**Keywords:** Achievement of business objectives, customer care, customer retention, customer satisfaction, Ghana, telecom companies

## INTRODUCTION

Basically, customers are assets that need to be acquired before they can be managed for profit. More importantly, organizations go out of business when they lose consumers. That is why efforts are being made towards retaining the customers of an organization (Barak *et al.*, 2010). According to the Informa Telecoms and Media (2010), the telecommunications industry is at a point marked by saturation, competition, stagnant revenue growth, increasing customer care and subscriber acquisition costs. As such, the ability to retain an existing customer has become critical to revenue mobilization. Mobile operators have appreciated that the cost of acquiring a new customer is incrementally greater than the cost of retaining an existing one.

Customer satisfaction in the (ICT) telecommunications industry may be related to quality of a product or service offering. With product or service quality there may also be several dimensions (Roos *et al.*, 2005), such as what the product offers, product or service reliability, timeliness, friendliness of the service providers, etc. Therefore depending on the purpose one wants to achieve, one can relate satisfaction to any

object of interest (Turel and Serenko, 2006; Cooil *et al.*, 2007).

In this study, customer satisfaction is defined in relation to only dimensions connected to the service quality delivered by Airtel Ghana Limited, a Ghanaian telecommunications company (Owusu-Ansah and Nartey, 2012). The mobile network customer service in Ghana has had media complaints in the past three years due to the dissatisfaction of consumers. Marketing, management and strategic issues in organizations recognize the importance of customer satisfaction as key to customer retention. In particular, the problems facing Airtel Ghana include high competition from the other networks and customer retention.

**Objectives of the study:** The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of customer retention on the achievement of strategic ICT business objectives at Airtel Ghana Limited. Specifically, we would like to:

- Identify the customer retention strategies (if any) of Airtel Ghana Limited
- Assess management and staff's commitment to the implementation of the selected customer retention strategy (ies)

- Identify the challenges faced by Airtel Ghana Limited in implementing its customer retention strategy
- Find out the extent to which customer retention contributes to the achievement of Airtel Ghana Limited's strategic business' objectives in the long run.

**Significance of the study:** This research will unfold the lapses in customer retention in mobile telecommunications companies in Ghana. By identifying these lapses, management and operators of mobile networks can consider the suggested recommendations to improve on their services towards customer retention. The study will help management to determine how challenges of implementing customer retention in the information and communication industry in Ghana could be dealt with in order to improve organizational performance, increase customer value, reduce defection rate and increase customer life time value.

The findings of the research can be used by service providers in building relationship with corporate customers and in designing loyalty programmes. Airtel Ghana would adopt the findings to have competitive advantage over its rivals in the industry. Understanding, managing, growing and retaining its customers are some of the key initiatives critical for their success in the coming years. Moreover, the research will be of significance to the marketing profession. Findings and recommendations may be used for enhancing other similar and future researches and also serve as a secondary source of information.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review, we provide a framework for establishing the importance of our study as well as a benchmark for comparing results with other findings.

**Customer retention:** Customer retention is an important objective in competitive and mature markets. According to Silva and Yapa (2009), customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are integral parts of customer retention process. Dawkins and Reichheld (1990) pointed out that focusing efforts on retaining customers must be done in the context of customer experience. They suggested that, to win or retain customers, organizations should identify potential defectors, communicate with customers, listen to front line people, treat valuable customers well, be fair and win the right customers back. Furthermore, the greater the experience a customer has with a service provider the greater the chances of meeting his expectations in perceived values, hence his retention. Service quality is also considered a major determinant in customer retention and building value relationship (Venetis and Ghauri, 2004).

Pilecki *et al.* (2007) recommended that, customer retention tactics adopted by organizations' needs to be

strategic. Pilecki adds that most institutions are now building strategies for customer retention after *the* earlier focus on acquisition. In general, satisfied subscribers have no incentive to search for other networks. According to Adebayo (2008), in Nigeria, acquiring a new customer can cost 6 to 7 times more than retaining an existing customer. Happy subscribers reward companies for their emphasis on service with repeat purchases. When operators make it easy for subscribers in terms of access to good quality service and prompt complaint resolution, they tend to spend more on the airtime of that network (Oyeniya and Abiodun, 2008).

Harris (2003) also outlines the following costs of losing a customer as a result of poor service. The company loses money as customers cease doing business with it, employees may lose their jobs; the company loses its reputation and eventually goes out of business. These mentioned costs do affect the Ghanaian environment where customer care does not seem to be a priority for many business organizations. With mobile telecommunications companies, expectations are high. Customers require services like uninterrupted network, moderate charges, on time response to challenges (Wireless Data Services, 2011).

**Barriers to excellent customer retention:** There are some barriers that inhibit excellent customer retention. According to Harris (2003), two major classifications may be identified: organizational barriers and personal barriers. Organizational barriers are those created by poor management business philosophy and include lack of marketing orientation, tall and bureaucratic organization structures, insufficient or unreliable equipment, restrictive company policies, lack of management commitment, unwillingness to change old practices/cultures and lack of empowerment. On the other hand, personal barriers are those created by people involved directly in service delivery-customer service staff. These include laziness, poor communication skills, poor time management, poor attitude and poor stress management.

**Framework for customer retention improvement:** Given the impact that improved customer retention can have on business profitability, there is a need for a structured approach which organizations can follow to enhance their retention and profitability levels. Three major steps have been identified that are involved in such an approach: the measurement of customer retention; the identification of root causes of defection and the development of corrective action to improve retention. Satisfaction is noted as merely a step towards the goal of customer retention and that in addition to customer satisfaction; firms must build customer relationships that will prevent their customers from defecting or becoming easy targets poachers (Stevens, 2005).

**Customer care/service:** An organization's ability to remain in business is a function of its competitiveness and its ability to win customers from the competition. The customer is the foundation of business and he keeps the business in existence. A company in a competitive business environment must therefore focus on delivering products and associated services to continually fit the tastes of its target customers. Poor service creates negative feelings about a product. As competition has become more global and intense, many organizations have realized that they cannot compete on price alone. Hence companies have developed strategies of providing excellent customer care to differentiate their products and services (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Harris (2003) sees customer service as anything that enhances the customer's experience of a purchase interaction. Harris added that the ultimate goal of customer service is to achieve customer satisfaction by meeting customers' expectations. Thus, we can say that customer service is about customer satisfaction. For companies providing pure services/care such as mobile communications, this indicates the need to achieve excellence in customer satisfaction regarding both product quality (quality of physical products such as mobile phone handsets, modems, etc) and the quality of associated sales and after-sales services (Oghojafor *et al.*, 2012).

**Understanding customer needs and expectations:** The achievement of strong customer satisfaction is closely related to understanding customer needs and expectations. According to the Kano model of attractive quality, (Kano *et al.*, 1984), customer needs can be divided into:

- **Basic needs:** Obvious needs of customers and if not met, he is dissatisfied, however meeting this needs may not be enough for customer satisfaction.
- **Expected needs:** These are important needs that customers are fully aware of and satisfaction is expected in every purchase.
- **Excitement needs:** These are unconscious and unspoken needs of customers. By identifying and satisfying such needs, companies will have added large value to customers and can win loyal customers.

Studies that support the notion that expectations precede satisfaction include: Anderson *et al.* (1994), who conducted investigation on Swedish mobile firms and reported that there is a positive and significant relationship between expectations and customer satisfaction. They described expectation as an accumulation of information about quality from the outside sources (e.g., advertising, word of mouth and general media) and past experiences. Cadotte *et al.*

(1987) conducted investigation on food restaurant and reported that expectation is significantly correlated with satisfaction. Additionally, expectation is a pre-purchase choice process and form a part of evaluation standards of conceptualizing satisfaction process. Oliver (1981) studied retail store operations and reported that expectation has direct influence on satisfaction (Spreng and Olshavsky, 1993).

Thus, customers purchase services based on their needs and they have expectations that the purchased services will meet their needs. Customers in turn assess the service performance in accordance with how well it meets their expectations and this in turn, relates to their retention.

**Customer retention and business performance:** Managers often use customer feedback data to set goals and monitor performance. For goal-setting and performance-monitoring purposes, managers value customer feedback metrics that are easy to comprehend and communicate and that have simple and direct predictive relationships with future business performance (Morgan and Rego, 2006).

According to Huber *et al.* (2007), Customer Experience Management (CEM) -helps to satisfy customer needs, increase customer retention and optimize business performance and profitability. Strategic CEM uses customer feedback to prioritize actions and improve processes, so as to optimize overall business performance by developing better customer-centric strategies.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Khan (1999), the theoretical framework of a study is a structure that can hold or support the theory of a research work. It presents the theory which explains why the problem under study actually exists. Below is the theoretical framework of our study (Fig. 1).

The commitment of the telecom organization in adding value to the customer relationship through the provision of reliable and quality service has a significant effect on customer retention (Chen and Ching, 2007). Airtel's commitment is reciprocated by the customers through re-patronage and word-of-mouth recommendation. Customer care relates to customer support and complaint management systems which include promptness (ability to get attendant quickly), attitude (response of the attendant) and competence (ability to provide a solution). Customer satisfaction is an experience-based assessment made by the customer on how far his own expectations about the individual characteristics, or the overall functionality, of the services obtained from the provider have been fulfilled. Good customer care yields high customer satisfaction and high commitment of staff yields good quality of

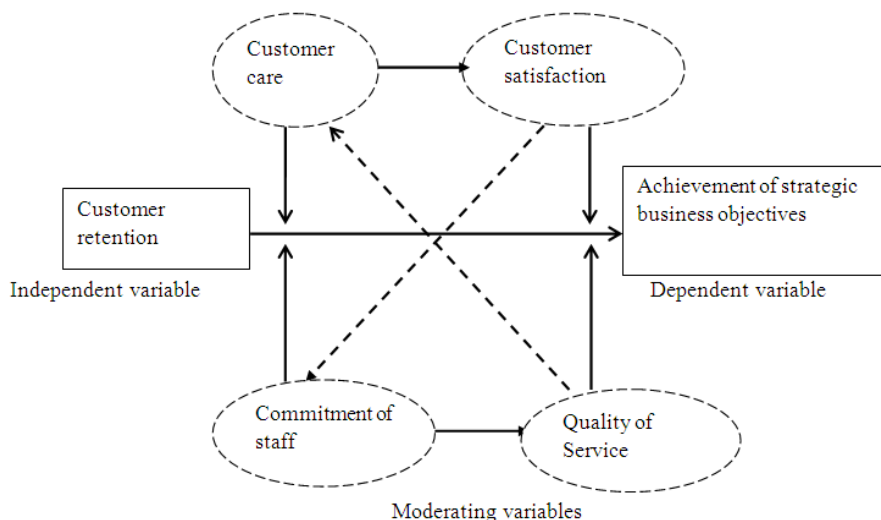


Fig. 1: Schematic diagram of the theoretical framework

service. Thus, factors such as care, satisfaction, staff commitment and service quality influence customers to remain loyal to a network and hence their retention (Trasorras *et al.*, 2009; Farn and Huang, 2009).

Coyne (1989) states that customer satisfaction has measurable impact on customer retention, in that, when satisfaction reaches a certain level, on the high side, loyalty increases dramatically; at the same time, when satisfaction falls to a certain point, loyalty reduces equally dramatically. Payne and Frow (2005) stated that organizations are increasingly recognizing that enhanced customer satisfaction leads to better customer retention and profitability. Many organizations are now reviewing their customer service strategies to find ways to boost retention rates as a means of improving their business performance. Often, this entails a fundamental shift in business emphasis from customer acquisition to customer retention. While staff and management commit to focusing specific efforts on retaining customers, it must be done in the context of the overall customer experience. Thus, Dawkins and Reichheld (1990) stated that in order to win or retain customers as a strategic business objective, one has to listen to front-line people, identify potential defectors, communicate with known customers, treat valuable customers well, be fair (even when one does not have to) and win the right customers back.

**Airtel Ghana limited:** Ghana has been a pioneer in African telecommunications. Between 1994 and 2000, Ghana moved from a government-controlled to a competitive telecom environment that allowed internet and mobile network providers to operate (Addy-Nayo, 2001). The arrival of two new international submarine fibre optic cables, Glo-1 and Main One in 2009 and 2010 has also brought competition to the bandwidth sector. This, in combination with national fibre

backbone networks, has revolutionized the country's broadband market and paved the way for convergence of technologies and services. Ghana has become one of the continent's most vibrant mobile markets with six competing operators, including MTN, Vodafone, Tigo, Espresso, Glo and Airtel. Airtel Ghana currently holds 15% of Ghana's mobile telecom market share, with about 3 million customers, offering variety of telecom products and services.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research method:** This research used the quantitative method of enquiry. The method allows the selection of a random sample from a large population to obtain empirical knowledge. A small sample of the population was selected and used to generalize the findings for the larger group (Creswell, 2009). This quantitative approach was appropriate because we desired to assess the effect of customer retention and the achievement of strategic business objectives. The method helped acquire information that was not available at other sources and there was standardization, that is, the same information was collected from all respondents (Owens, 2002).

**Population and sample size:** Airtel Ghana Limited has 600 employees. Our study covered the customer unit of the company, located in the head office in Accra. The population selected was designed to obtain adequate and diverse views pertaining to assessing the impact of customer retention and the achievement of strategic business objectives at the organization. A sample size of (15) employees who were directly related to customer retention was selected. These employees were selected specifically from the Marketing Department and Customer Care/Retention Department as they are

those in charge of the systems which are run to track customer retention.

The group was selected because of their rich knowledge and experience in handling all complaints of customers. The selected group is also the employees mandated to be responsible for customer loyalty, retention and satisfaction. We thus had the opportunity to gain clarification and in-depth understanding of their diverse responses. A purposive non-probabilistic sampling method was used in selecting the individual subjects since specific information was to be better provided by them. It is believed that irrespective of the sample size, the expected response was retrieved for the research.

**Source of data:** Primary data was obtained from questionnaires administered to the fifteen customer service staff. The Manager in Charge of Customer Unit was also interviewed. All this was carried out during working hours of the staff-a period when all the respondent target group was present. Data was also obtained from secondary sources such as the internet, textbooks journals and electronic resources.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data analysis (using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was based on our research questions. Descriptive analysis tools were employed to develop, pie charts, bar graphs and frequencies which were constructively analyzed. The analysis is guided by the main objective that seeks to determine the impact of customer retention on the achievement of strategic business objectives by Airtel Ghana Limited. The results were organized under the themes of the objectives outlined earlier and are grouped according to responses from the respondents.

**Background of respondents:** The study revealed differences in age distribution. From the responses shown in Table 1, 10 (66.7%) were between the age range of 21-30 whilst five (23.3%) were between age group of 31-40. Therefore, in the Marketing and Customer Care/Retention Unit of Airtel Ghana Ltd, there were more in the age group of 21-30 than 31-40.

This trend was believed to be so, in that most work related activities were stressful and demanding, so younger staff were preferred in the unit.

On gender distribution, most of the staff (66.7%) were females. Again, five (33.3%) were males as shown in Table 2. This means that the females were more than the males in the Marketing and Customer Care/Retention Unit of Airtel Ghana Ltd.

Respondents were also asked to state their highest educational level. Eleven, representing 73% of the respondents, said they had a post-graduate qualification

Table 1: Age range of respondents

Age range	Frequency (%)
21-30	10 (66.7%)
31-40	5 (33.3%)
Total	15 (100%)

Table 2: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender of respondents	Frequency (%)
Male	5 (33.3%)
Female	10 (66.7%)
Total	15 (100%)

Table 3: Educational level of respondents

Educational level of respondents	Frequency (%)
Undergraduate	4 (26.7%)
Post graduate	11 (73.3%)
Total	15 (100%)

Table 4: Length of service at Airtel Ghana limited

Length of service	Frequency (%)
Less than 1 year	1 (7%)
1-2 years	1 (7%)
3-4 years	6 (40%)
5 years and above	7 (46.7%)
Total	15 (100%)

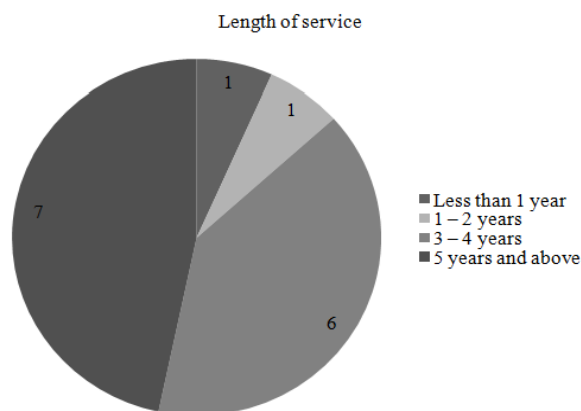


Fig. 2: Length of service at Airtel Ghana limited

at the time of the research. Only four (26.7%) of respondents said that they had an undergraduate qualification (Table 3). The results therefore show that the majority of staff within the Marketing and Customer Care/Retention Unit of Airtel Ghana Limited had post graduate qualification.

The question was posed to find out the length of service of the staff within the unit, especially those related to customer needs and retention. Table 4 and Fig. 2 show the results. It may be observed from Table 4 and Fig. 2 that, seven (46.7%) had worked in the department between 5 years and above. Six representing 40% had served the department for between 3-4 years as those in charge of customer needs.

**Retention strategies:** Respondents were asked about the existence of customer retention strategies in Airtel Ghana Limited. The responses are shown in Table 5. From the Table 5, all the staff of the customer unit (100.0%) indicated that customer retention strategies

Table 5: Customer retention strategies

Customer retention strategies exist?	Frequency (%)
Yes	15 (100%)
No	0 (0.0%)
Total	15 (100%)

Table 6: Management and staff commitment

Level of commitment	Frequency (%)
Very committed	13 (86.7%)
Somewhat committed	2 (13.3%)
Not committed	0 (0%)
Don't know	0 (0%)
Total	15 (100%)

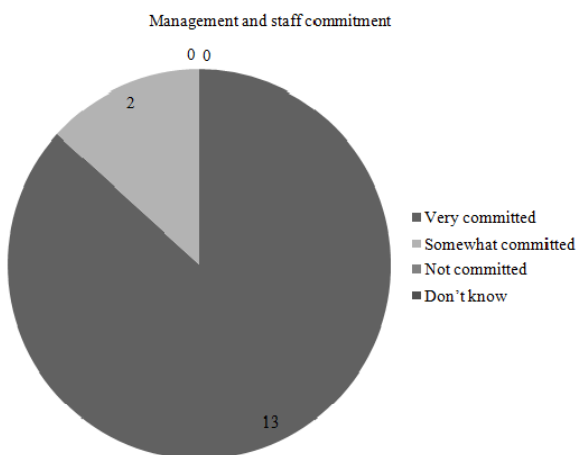


Fig. 3: Management and staff commitment

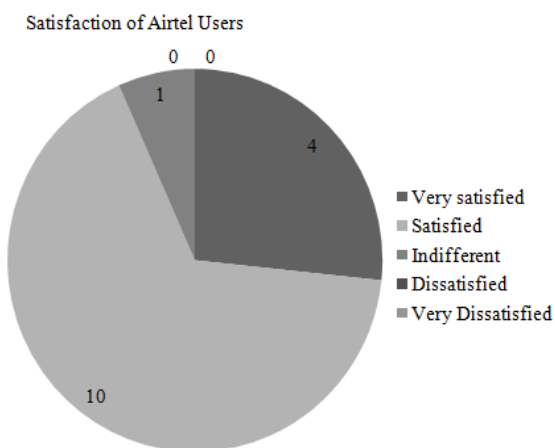


Fig. 4: Satisfaction of Airtel users

existed for Airtel Ghana. This means that all were aware of the fact that customer retention strategies are available for this telecom organization.

In Table 6 and Fig. 3, respondents were asked on the level of commitment of management of the company. Thirteen staff representing 86.7% stated that management of Airtel were very committed to the implementation of customer retention strategies. Two (13.3%) respondents stated that management were somewhat committed.

Customer care of Airtel Users

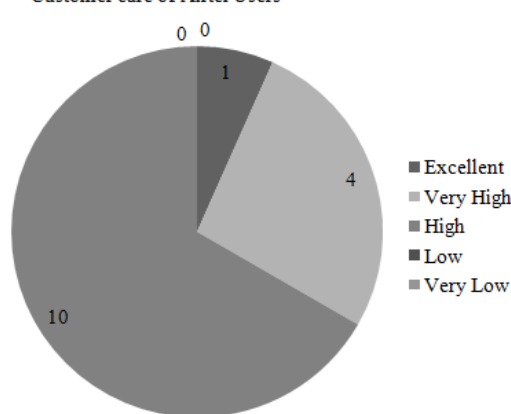


Fig. 5: Customer care for Airtel users

Various reasons were given by the majority of respondents about why they stated that management and staff were very committed. According to them, management was very committed to implementing customer retention strategies because:

- Every staff wanted good performance assessment in order to obtain bonus salary payments at the end of the year.
- Strategies and requests are promptly approved by management if only they will enhance customer loyalty.
- Management provides required funds and logistics to run and implement strategies regarding customer retention.
- Management enforces the group policy whereby staff are encouraged to make regular monthly visits to their target customers in order to retain them.

Only two (13.3%) of the respondents of the research were of the view that management were somewhat committed to the implementation of the customer retention strategies in Airtel. These were their reasons:

- Although there are systems in place for the implementation of retention programmes, bureaucratic approval levels are many and frustrating.
- Often, there arise conflicts between Airtel Ghana strategies and those recommended by the mother Airtel company.

**Customer care and satisfaction:** The staff were asked to state the satisfaction level of the users of Airtel network. Their views are represented in Table 7 and Fig. 4. From the Table 7 and Fig. 4, ten respondents representing 66% were satisfied with services rendered by the company as compared to four, representing 26% of respondents, who were very satisfied with the

Table 7: Satisfaction of Airtel users

Satisfaction of Airtel Users	Frequency (%)
Very satisfied	4 (26.7%)
Satisfied	10 (66.7%)
Indifferent	1 (7%)
Dissatisfied	0 (0%)
Very dissatisfied	0 (0%)
Total	15 (100.0%)

Table 8: Customer care of Airtel users

Level of customer care	Frequency (%)
Excellent	1 (6.7%)
Very high	4 (26.7%)
High	10 (66.7%)
Low	0 (0.0%)
Very low	0 (0.0%)
Total	15(100.0%)

Table 9: Are challenges encountered in the implementation of customer retention policies?

Challenges encountered?	Frequency (%)
Yes	15 (100.0%)
No	0 (0.0%)
Total	15 (100.0%)

Table 10: Does customer retention contribute to the achievement of strategic business objectives?

Customer retention contributes to achievement of objectives?	Frequency (%)
Yes	15 (100.0%)
No	0 (0.0%)
Total	15 (100.0%)

services of Airtel Ghana. This shows that the majority of staff members perceived that customers were satisfied with their services.

According to Table 8 and Fig. 5, ten respondents representing 66.7% were of the view that customer care to the users could be rated as high as compared to four, representing 26.7%, who felt that customer care was very high. This shows that the majority of staff members perceived that customers were receiving high customer care from their services. This was significant to contributing to the retention of customers.

**Any challenges:** We found out from the staff whether the Airtel company usually faced some challenges in the implementation of its customer retention strategies. The responses are presented in Table 9.

All respondents agreed to the statement that with regards to the implementation of its customer retention strategies in Airtel Ghana, there were some challenges.

We further wanted to identify the challenges faced by the staff on implementing customer retention strategies. They highlighted on the following:

- **Financial constraints:** In terms of budgetary allocation, to support the retention programmes.
- **Bureaucracy:** Long processes to go through before requests or support can be obtained from management.

- Technical issues such as frequent network failures and entire system failures.
- Airtel Ghana packages and offers are often not as exciting as compared to those of competitors.
- **Poor team work:** Sometimes, other departments who would have to feed the customer care unit with required information turned to delay the process and
- High workloads due to understaffing.

**Customer retention and achievement of objectives:**

We sought the opinion of the respondents on whether customer retention contributed to the achievement of strategic business objectives of Airtel Ghana. According to all the respondents (100%), customer retention contributes significantly to the achievement of Airtel Ghana Ltd’s strategic business objectives (Table 10). This assertion by the staff was confirmed by Silva and Yapa (2009). According to them, customers now have many services to choose from and therefore they may decide to switch to any of the existing networks. Management must, therefore, endeavour to adopt a customer retention approach. This includes new ways of meeting customer demands.

The respondents gave several reasons for stating that customer retention contributes to the achievement of strategic business objectives, of the company, including the following:

- When retention strategies are being implemented, monitoring systems show that Airtel users get more active on the network, which indicates positive impact on the organizations objectives.
- When strong relationships are established with customers they remain active on the service plan and even prompt us of offers given them by our competitors.
- The more active customers are on the network, the higher the company revenue. The overall company revenue keeps increasing monthly, as a result of new customers joining and existing customers staying on the network.
- Customer retention is the only reason to explain the current number of Airtel users on the network.
- Irrespective of the newly introduced mobile number portability in Ghana, whereby customers on a particular network may migrate to other networks, Airtel Ghana has so far retained most of its customers.

**SUMMARY**

The study set out to find out the impact of customer retention on the achievement of strategic business objectives at Airtel Ghana Limited. The specific objectives were to identify the customer retention strategies, to assess management and staff’s

commitment to the implementation, the challenges faced (if any) by the company in implementing the strategies and the extent to which customer retention contributes to the achievement of business objectives in the long run.

To achieve the objectives of the study, we used a quantitative methodology that involved the use of questionnaires as the data collection method. The study adopted a model which factors on customer retention by investigating the essential elements resulting in customer retention and in turn, contributing to the achievement of strategic objectives. These factors included customer care, customer satisfaction, staff commitment and service quality which influence one's loyalty. The loyalty of the customers would cause them to stay with Airtel network, subsequently the achievement of the strategic objective of the company.

**Bio-data:** The Customer Unit of Airtel Ghana Ltd, was found in the study to have more (66.7%) staff of age group of 21-30 than 31-40 and that, most staff (66.7%) were females. Seventy-three percent of the respondents had post-graduate qualifications and, seven (46.7%) had worked in the customer unit for five years and above.

**Customer retention strategies:** Airtel Ghana Ltd has adopted the customer retention strategies in the administration of their customers' loyalty to the network. All the staff of the customer unit (100.0%) affirmed that customer retention strategies existed and that management was committed to implementing those strategies. In the study, 86.7% confirmed that management was very committed to that effect. Some of their reasons included the fact that all strategies and requests were promptly approved by management provided it would enhance customer loyalty. Other sections of the respondents confirmed that management provides required funds and logistics to run and implement strategies regarding customer retention.

**Contribution of customer retention strategy to Airtel's objectives:** The staff (100%) in charge of customer unit stated that customer retention contributes significantly to the achievement of Airtel Ghana Ltd's strategic business objectives. The study revealed that even though there existed challenges, management was keen to overcome them because of the benefits. These benefits include the facts that customers of Airtel Ghana have stayed loyal to the company and would hopefully keep on their network; that they will refer others unto the network and this will, in turn, increase the company's revenue.

**Challenges in implementing customer retention strategy:** All respondents (100%) agreed to the existence of challenges in the implementation of its customer retention strategy. The challenges identified included financial constraints in terms of budgetary allocation to support the retention campaign and long bureaucratic systems. They also cited the existence of

technical issues which included systems failures, ICT related issues, as well as their department being understaffed.

## CONCLUSION

Customer retention is increasingly one of the critical marketing objectives for most telecom service providers, while product, price and customer service attributes still play important roles. Customer satisfaction has been hitherto revealed to be a necessity to customer loyalty and retention. This study was undertaken to examine and understand the impact of customer retention on achieving the strategic objectives of Airtel Ghana Ltd.

The nature of competition and the sophistication of the consumer in terms of their awareness to higher quality of services demand service providers to develop more pragmatic strategies to ensure customers are retained. Promotional activities also need to be put in place to increase customer preference for products as well as remain loyal irrespective of competitor's activities.

It was found from the staff that people factors play a more important role in customer satisfaction than technology and price-factors such as value delivery as well as providing solutions and support. The results indicate that service providers should invest more on developing customer satisfaction, thereby positively increasing customer retention.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study noted some areas of concern. These include system failures, I.T support and inadequate staffing of customer retention units. Other challenges identified include bureaucracy, financial constraints and technical issues like network failures. It is recommended that Airtel Ghana Limited addresses these issues in order to help increase performance and lead to better service quality. The findings may also be recommended for service providers, generally, in building relationship with corporate customers and in designing loyalty programmes.

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