Strategic Leadership, E-Service Quality, and Customer Retention: A Theoretical Framework for Digital Transformation

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Information of Article

Abstract

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, strategic leadership plays a crucial role in driving digital transformation across industries, particularly in telecommunications. This paper proposes a theoretical framework that explores the relationship between strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention, with a focus on how leadership-driven digital initiatives can enhance service quality and foster customer loyalty. E-service quality, defined by factors such as user-friendliness, reliability, personalization, and security, serves as a critical mediator between leadership and retention, influencing customer experiences and satisfaction. Despite the recognized importance of these elements, there is a gap in understanding how strategic leadership directly impacts e-service quality and how this, in turn, affects customer retention. The proposed framework addresses these gaps by highlighting the integral role of leadership in promoting continuous innovation and service excellence. Through this model, telecommunications companies, such as Saudi Telecom Company (STC), can better align leadership strategies with e-service improvements to meet the evolving demands of digital customers, ensuring long-term loyalty. The study emphasizes the need for further empirical research to validate the proposed relationships and explore additional factors, such as customer engagement and the role of emerging technologies like AI, that may influence the dynamics between e-service quality and retention in the digital era.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has become a powerful driving force in modern industries, reshaping how organizations operate, interact with customers, and deliver services. Across various sectors, including telecommunications, digital platforms now serve as the primary means through which businesses connect with their clientele. The increasing reliance on digital solutions underscores the importance of effective leadership in guiding these transformation efforts. Strategic leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that digital initiatives align with organizational goals, fostering innovation, enhancing employee skills, and most importantly, optimizing e-service quality (Borodako et al., 2023). As technology continues to evolve, the quality of e-services defined by factors such as user-friendliness, reliability, personalization, and security has become central to shaping customer experiences. In the telecommunications industry, where digital interactions dominate, maintaining high standards of e-service quality is essential for securing long-term customer loyalty and satisfaction (Amoako et al., 2023). In this digital age, customer retention has emerged as a key measure of success, particularly for companies like Saudi Telecom Company (STC), where competition is fierce, and customer expectations are constantly rising. For such organizations, effective leadership that promotes high e-service standards can lead to increased customer

satisfaction, trust, and retention (Cram & Mouajou-Kenfack, 2023). Strategic leadership, therefore, is not only about spearheading digital transformation but also about ensuring that these transformations translate into tangible improvements in service quality, which ultimately impact customer loyalty (Saeed et al., 2023).

Despite the growing recognition of the role of strategic leadership in driving digital transformation, there are significant gaps in understanding how this leadership directly influences e-service quality and, by extension, customer retention. Current literature often treats strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention as separate areas of study, without adequately exploring the interconnections between them, particularly within the telecommunications sector. Additionally, while numerous studies have emphasized the importance of strategic marketing in the digital era, the specific mechanisms through which marketing strategies, combined with leadership efforts, influence customer retention remain underexplored (Shaikh et al., 2023). In industries such as telecommunications, where digital platforms are critical touchpoints for customer interactions, the failure to integrate strategic leadership with e-service quality improvements can lead to inconsistent customer experiences and hinder efforts to foster loyalty. For companies like STC, these challenges are compounded by the rapid pace of technological change and the high expectations of digitally savvy consumers (El Garem et al., 2024). The difficulties faced by STC and similar organizations underscore the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership and e-service quality interact to influence customer retention, particularly in the context of digital transformation (Sinnaiah et al., 2023). This study aims to fill this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that links these critical variables, thereby providing a deeper understanding of how organizations can improve customer retention through strategic digital initiatives.

The primary objective of this research is to propose a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention, with a particular focus on the telecommunications sector. This framework will address the current gaps in the literature by exploring how leadership-driven digital transformation efforts can enhance e-service quality and, in turn, improve customer loyalty. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the role of strategic leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement that elevates e-service standards (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024). Additionally, the research will examine the mediating role of e-service quality in linking leadership initiatives to customer retention, providing insights into how leadership can influence customer loyalty indirectly through improved digital services. By focusing on telecommunications companies like STC, this study seeks to offer practical recommendations for enhancing customer retention through strategic leadership and digital innovation.

To guide this investigation, the study will address several key questions. First, it seeks to explore how strategic leadership influences e-service quality in the context of digital transformation initiatives. Understanding this relationship is crucial for identifying the leadership practices that are most effective in driving service quality improvements. Second, the study aims to examine the connection between e-service quality and customer retention, particularly within the telecommunications sector, where digital services are central to customer interactions. Finally, the research will investigate how e-service quality mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention, shedding light on the indirect effects of leadership on customer loyalty through service quality enhancements.

This study contributes to both academic literature and practical business applications by introducing a

comprehensive theoretical framework that links strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention in the digital era (Borodako et al., 2023). Academically, the research addresses the current gaps in understanding how leadership and e-service quality intersect to influence customer loyalty, particularly within the context of digital transformation. The proposed framework offers new insights into the mediating role of e-service quality, positioning it as a critical factor that bridges leadership initiatives and customer retention outcomes. This contribution is particularly significant for industries like telecommunications, where digital interactions are increasingly becoming the primary mode of customer engagement (Amoako et al., 2023). Practically, the findings of this study have the potential to guide telecommunications companies, such as STC, in their efforts to improve service delivery and enhance customer loyalty. By aligning leadership strategies with e-service improvements, organizations can better meet the needs of their digital customers, ensuring higher levels of satisfaction and retention (Cram & Mouajou-Kenfack, 2023). This alignment is crucial in today's competitive business environment, where the ability to retain customers through superior digital services is a key determinant of long-term success.

2. Theoretical Foundations
2.1 Strategic Leadership and Digital Transformation

Strategic leadership plays a critical role in shaping the direction and success of organizations undergoing digital transformation. Leadership theories emphasize the ability of strategic leaders to guide organizations in navigating complex environments by setting a clear vision, fostering innovation, and mobilizing resources towards achieving competitive advantages. Ahmadi and Ieamsom (2022) note that strategic leaders must create and maintain a culture that encourages technological adoption and innovation, aligning the organization's goals with the demands of the digital era. These leaders are responsible for identifying new digital opportunities and cultivating a mindset of continuous improvement within the workforce, ensuring that employees are equipped with the necessary skills to excel in a technologically driven environment (Kalia et al., 2021).

Leaders who prioritize digital transformation typically focus on enhancing employee competence and improving organizational capabilities in e-service delivery. This entails fostering a collaborative culture where employees are empowered to experiment with new technologies and processes, thereby increasing the quality of digital services (Al Mamun et al., 2019). Strategic leadership is not only about guiding digital adoption but also about ensuring that employees possess the necessary competencies to leverage digital tools effectively. This competence development is vital for maintaining a high standard of e-service quality, particularly in sectors like telecommunications, where service reliability and customer satisfaction are directly impacted by the technical proficiency of the workforce (Binzafrah & Taleedi, 2022). In sum, strategic leaders play a pivotal role in fostering digital innovation, building employee competence, and driving e-service quality improvements, which are essential for maintaining competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving digital landscape (Palazzo et al., 2021).

2.2 E-Service Quality in the Digital Era

E-service quality has emerged as a central focus for organizations, especially as digital transformation reshapes the way businesses engage with customers. Theoretical perspectives on e-service quality highlight several key dimensions that contribute to a superior online experience: user-friendliness, reliability, personalization, responsiveness, and security (Willcocks, 2024). User-friendliness refers to

the ease with which customers can navigate and use digital platforms, an aspect that is crucial for enhancing customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, reliability ensures that digital services function smoothly without interruptions, contributing to building customer trust (Arguello et al., 2020). Personalization, another critical component, allows businesses to tailor services to individual customer needs, thus enhancing engagement and loyalty (Butkouskaya et al., 2021). Responsiveness relates to how quickly and effectively service providers address customer issues, while security focuses on protecting customer data, which is essential for maintaining trust in digital services (Chepurna & Rialp Criado, 2021).

Digital transformation has significantly elevated e-service standards, as customers increasingly expect seamless, fast, and personalized experiences online. Technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and data analytics have enabled organizations to offer more sophisticated and responsive e-services. These advancements not only improve service delivery but also allow for greater customization and anticipation of customer needs (Fagundes et al., 2023). As digital platforms become the primary mode of interaction between businesses and customers, the ability to consistently deliver high-quality e-services is crucial for retaining customers and fostering long-term loyalty (Amoako et al., 2023). In this context, the continuous evolution of e-service quality driven by digital transformation is vital for organizations to meet and exceed customer expectations in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Cupertino et al., 2023).

2.3 Customer Retention in Digital Transformation

Customer retention has long been a key focus for businesses, and in the digital era, retaining customers has become even more critical due to the ease with which customers can switch between service providers. Theoretical models of customer retention emphasize the importance of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and switching costs (Rawashdeh et al., 2022). Satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal to a brand, particularly when they feel that the services they receive consistently meet or exceed their expectations (Jha et al., 2022). Customer loyalty, in turn, reduces the likelihood of churn and increases the customer's lifetime value to the business. Moreover, switching costs both tangible and intangible act as deterrents for customers considering leaving a service provider. In the telecommunications sector, for example, switching costs may include the hassle of changing service plans, the time investment in learning new systems, or the potential loss of accumulated rewards or benefits (Borodako et al., 2023).

There is a clear link between improved e-service quality and customer loyalty, particularly in industries that rely heavily on digital interactions, such as telecommunications. Studies have shown that when e-service quality is high, customers are more satisfied with their overall experience, which in turn fosters stronger loyalty to the service provider (Tillmar et al., 2022). E-service quality improvements, such as faster response times, more reliable service delivery, and enhanced personalization, contribute to a better customer experience, reducing the likelihood of churn. As digital transformation continues to advance, organizations must prioritize the enhancement of their e-service offerings to retain customers in an increasingly competitive landscape (Shaikh et al., 2023).

2.4 Mediating Role of E-Service Quality

The relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention is complex and often mediated by the quality of e-services provided. Theoretical frameworks suggest that e-service quality acts as a critical

mediator that links the influence of strategic leadership to customer retention outcomes (Kusa et al., 2024). Strategic leadership drives the adoption of technologies and processes that enhance service quality, which in turn impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (Al-Alawi et al., 2023). When leaders prioritize investments in technology, employee development, and customer-centric innovations, the resulting improvements in e-service quality directly contribute to higher levels of customer retention (Saeed et al., 2023). By improving digital service standards, strategic leadership ensures that customers receive reliable, personalized, and secure services that meet their expectations, thus fostering long-term loyalty (Holtström & Anderson, 2021).

Moreover, the provision of high-quality e-services enhances customer satisfaction and trust, which are key precursors to loyalty. Theories on customer satisfaction posit that when customers consistently receive reliable and responsive services, their trust in the service provider strengthens, leading to increased loyalty (Thomas-Francois et al., 2023). In this context, e-service quality not only mediates the relationship between leadership and retention but also serves as a critical enabler of customer trust and satisfaction. This trust is particularly important in sectors like telecommunications, where service reliability and data security are paramount (Troisi et al., 2023). Therefore, organizations that focus on enhancing e-service quality are better positioned to retain customers and build lasting relationships in the digital age (Sinnaiah et al., 2023).

3. Hypotheses Development
3.1 Hypothesis 1: Strategic Leadership and Customer Retention

The first hypothesis explores the direct relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention in the telecommunications sector. Leadership theories assert that strategic leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organizational outcomes by setting clear visions, inspiring innovation, and fostering a customer-centric culture (Ahmadi & Ieamsom, 2022). Leaders who prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty are more likely to implement strategies that align with customer needs, which directly contributes to higher retention rates. For instance, leaders in telecommunications companies often invest in technologies that enhance customer experience, such as artificial intelligence and automation, to provide seamless service delivery (Al Mamun et al., 2019). These investments, driven by leadership, foster long-term relationships with customers, reducing churn and enhancing loyalty (Tillmar et al., 2022). Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention in the telecommunications sector.

3.2 Hypothesis 2: Strategic Marketing and Customer Retention

Strategic marketing plays a crucial role in customer retention by aligning marketing efforts with customer preferences and behaviors, particularly in digital environments. In the context of telecommunications, data-driven marketing strategies allow companies to tailor their services to meet individual customer needs, thus fostering loyalty (Shaikh et al., 2023). By utilizing advanced analytics, organizations can identify trends and customer pain points, which can be addressed through targeted marketing campaigns and personalized services (Borodako et al., 2023). This targeted approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also builds stronger emotional connections with the brand, resulting in higher retention

rates (Saeed et al., 2023). Thus, strategic marketing that leverages data to understand and meet customer demands has a significant impact on customer retention, especially in a highly competitive sector like telecommunications. Consequently, the hypothesis is formulated as:

H2: Strategic marketing positively impacts customer retention, particularly through data-driven approaches in e-services.

3.3 Hypothesis 3: E-Service Quality and Customer Retention

The quality of e-services is increasingly recognized as a key driver of customer retention, particularly in sectors that rely heavily on digital platforms for service delivery, such as telecommunications. High e-service quality characterized by user-friendliness, reliability, personalization, responsiveness, and security enhances the customer experience and fosters loyalty (Willcocks, 2024). Research has consistently shown that customers who perceive the quality of e-services to be high are more likely to remain loyal to the service provider, as they trust the company's ability to meet their needs consistently (Troisi et al., 2023). Furthermore, reliable and secure digital services reduce the likelihood of customers switching to competitors, thereby increasing retention (Butkouskaya et al., 2021). In light of these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: E-service quality is positively associated with customer retention in telecommunications companies.

3.4 Hypothesis 4: Leadership and E-Service Quality

Strategic leadership not only influences customer retention directly but also plays a vital role in enhancing e-service quality. Leaders who prioritize digital transformation allocate resources effectively towards improving the technological infrastructure, training employees, and implementing innovative solutions to enhance service delivery (Kusa et al., 2024). These leaders understand the critical importance of e-service quality in retaining customers, especially in the telecommunications sector, where service reliability and personalization are key drivers of satisfaction (Shaikh et al., 2023). Strategic leaders who invest in improving digital services create a competitive advantage by ensuring that their organization can meet and exceed customer expectations consistently (Holström & Anderson, 2021). As such, strategic leadership significantly contributes to e-service quality by providing the necessary resources, fostering a culture of innovation, and setting a clear vision for service excellence. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H4: Strategic leadership significantly enhances e-service quality through effective resource allocation and vision.

3.5 Hypothesis 5: E-Service Quality as a Mediator

The mediating role of e-service quality in the relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention is a critical component of the theoretical framework. Strategic leadership drives improvements in e-service quality, which in turn influences customer retention by enhancing customer satisfaction and trust (Saeed et al., 2023). Theories of mediation suggest that the influence of leadership on retention is not always direct but is often channeled through key operational variables like service quality (Fagundes et al., 2023). When strategic leaders prioritize digital excellence, they improve the quality of e-services,

which positively affects customer perceptions and loyalty (Troisi et al., 2023). In this context, e-service quality acts as a conduit through which leadership efforts translate into higher customer retention rates. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: E-service quality mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention.

4. Gap in the Literature
4.1 Strategic Leadership and Digital Transformation

While strategic leadership is widely acknowledged as a critical driver of organizational success, there is limited research that specifically explores the direct impact of leadership on e-service quality within the context of digital transformation. Existing literature on leadership primarily focuses on its influence on overall organizational outcomes or employee performance, often overlooking how leadership shapes the quality of digital services delivered to customers (Cram & Mouajou-Kenfack, 2023). Given the growing importance of digital platforms in industries like telecommunications, understanding how leadership fosters digital innovation, enhances service quality, and aligns technological initiatives with customer needs is critical (Kankam-Kwarteng et al., 2022). Most studies focus on strategic leadership's broader implications but fail to address its direct impact on the development of e-service capabilities and its role in driving digital transformation (Saeed et al., 2023). This gap in the literature underscores the need for further research examining the specific mechanisms through which strategic leaders influence the quality of e-services, particularly in technology-driven sectors.

4.2 E-Service Quality in Telecommunications

In the telecommunications sector, e-service quality is essential for maintaining a competitive advantage, yet there remains a gap in understanding the specific elements of e-service quality that are most influential in retaining customers. Although several studies have examined general dimensions of e-service quality, such as user-friendliness, reliability, and personalization (Butkouskaya et al., 2021), limited research delves into which of these factors holds the most weight in determining customer loyalty within telecommunications (Sinnaiah et al., 2023). Additionally, the dynamic nature of digital services means that what constitutes high-quality service is constantly evolving, with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and automation further complicating the landscape (Fahim, 2019). This gap in understanding suggests a need for more nuanced studies that analyze how different e-service elements contribute to customer satisfaction and retention in the telecommunications industry, especially in an era of rapid digital transformation (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024).

4.3 Customer Retention in the Digital Era

Another significant gap in the literature pertains to the role of e-service quality as a mediating factor between strategic leadership and customer retention. While studies have explored customer retention strategies and the importance of leadership in shaping organizational outcomes, there is insufficient research on how improvements in e-service quality driven by strategic leadership lead to enhanced customer loyalty, particularly in digitally transformed environments (Amoako et al., 2023). Existing customer retention models often emphasize loyalty programs and customer satisfaction but fail to consider how digital service improvements mediate the relationship between leadership initiatives and

customer loyalty (Rossi et al., 2023). This is especially relevant in industries like telecommunications, where e-service platforms are the primary interface between customers and companies. Given the rising importance of digital channels, there is a pressing need for empirical studies that explore how leadership-driven e-service quality enhancements translate into higher customer retention rates in the digital era (Palazzo et al., 2021).

5. Conceptual Framework Development
5.1 Strategic Leadership and E-Service Quality

Strategic leadership is central to driving e-service quality improvements, particularly by fostering a culture of continuous innovation within the organization (Saeed et al., 2023). Leaders in the telecommunications sector are tasked with aligning their digital transformation strategies with customer expectations, ensuring that e-service platforms remain user-friendly, reliable, and secure (Borodako et al., 2023). Effective leaders can promote digital competence across teams, encouraging the adoption of emerging technologies like AI and data analytics to enhance service personalization and responsiveness (Cram & Mouajou-Kenfack, 2023). By setting a vision focused on continuous improvement and resource optimization, leaders can ensure that their organizations are equipped to meet the evolving demands of customers, which is critical for maintaining high e-service standards (Kankam-Kwarteng et al., 2022).

5.2 E-Service Quality and Customer Retention

The relationship between e-service quality and customer retention is particularly crucial in the telecommunications industry, where high-quality e-services are integral to building customer loyalty. Services that offer personalized experiences, seamless functionality, and timely support significantly contribute to customer satisfaction and long-term engagement (Sinnaiah et al., 2023). User-friendliness, reliability, and responsiveness are key dimensions of e-service quality that directly influence the likelihood of customers staying loyal to a brand (Butkouskaya et al., 2021). For instance, when e-services function without glitches and are responsive to customer needs, they create positive user experiences that strengthen customer trust and loyalty (Amoako et al., 2023). Additionally, high-quality e-services contribute to reducing customer churn by addressing pain points swiftly and effectively, further enhancing customer satisfaction. The integration of personalization, security, and responsiveness into e-service platforms not only meets customer expectations but also fosters a deeper sense of loyalty, as customers perceive value in services tailored to their specific needs (Ashiq & Hussain, 2024). Thus, companies that consistently deliver superior e-service experiences are better positioned to retain their customer base in an increasingly competitive digital market (El Garem et al., 2024).

### 5.3 Mediating Role of E-Service Quality

The framework highlights the mediating role of e-service quality in the relationship between strategic leadership and customer retention, suggesting that leadership efforts alone are insufficient to guarantee customer loyalty unless accompanied by tangible service quality improvements (Shaikh et al., 2023). E-service quality serves as the conduit through which leadership initiatives translate into enhanced customer experiences, thereby influencing retention outcomes. When leaders prioritize service quality through the adoption of advanced technologies, ensuring platform reliability, and fostering a customer-centric culture these efforts manifest in improved service delivery, which strengthens customer trust and

satisfaction (Mohammed & Al-Swidi, 2019). This mediation model suggests that e-service quality acts as a critical lever, amplifying the positive effects of strategic leadership on customer retention by ensuring that leadership strategies result in consistently high standards of digital interaction (Rossi et al., 2021).

5.4 Proposed Framework

The proposed conceptual framework integrates strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention, highlighting the critical relationships between these factors within the context of digital transformation. This framework builds on the notion that strategic leadership drives organizational efforts toward enhancing e-service quality, which in turn plays a pivotal role in fostering customer loyalty and retention (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024). By positioning e-service quality as a mediating factor, this model captures the dynamic interplay between leadership initiatives, service delivery improvements, and customer behavior. The framework addresses the gaps identified in the literature, emphasizing the underexplored links between leadership, digital service quality, and retention outcomes, particularly in industries such as telecommunications, where digital interaction is central to the customer experience (Amoako et al., 2023).
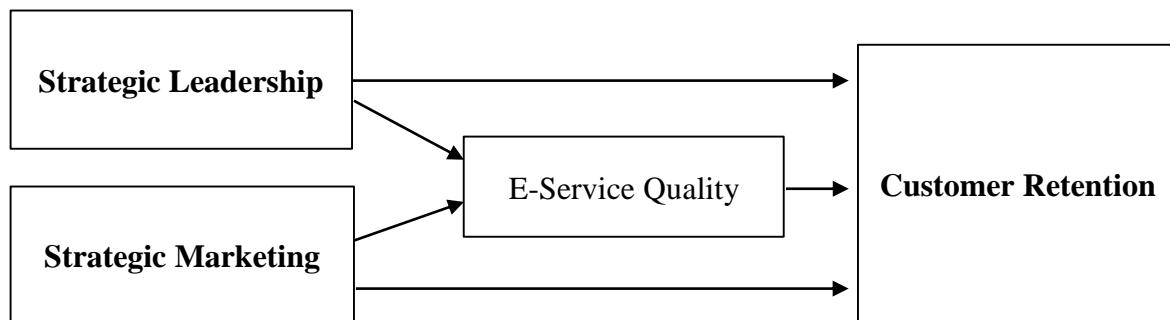
Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

6. Practical Implications

6.1 For Telecom Executives

Telecom executives must prioritize the alignment of strategic leadership with e-service quality enhancements to drive customer loyalty. One critical recommendation is to foster a customer-first culture by embedding leadership practices that encourage continuous innovation and agility in responding to customer needs (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024). Executives should allocate resources strategically to ensure that digital platforms remain reliable, user-friendly, and capable of delivering personalized experiences that meet evolving customer expectations (Cram & Mouajou-Kenfack, 2023). Moreover, encouraging cross-functional collaboration between leadership, IT, and customer service teams can help optimize the digital transformation process, ensuring that improvements in e-services are directly aligned with enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Borodako et al., 2023).

6.2 For Policymakers and Regulators

Policymakers and regulators play a key role in ensuring that e-service standards are maintained across industries, particularly in sectors like telecommunications where customer retention heavily depends on service reliability and security (Saeed et al., 2023). It is essential to establish guidelines that promote high standards of e-service quality including data protection, system reliability, and accessibility to ensure that customer trust is maintained. These standards should also incentivize innovation and technological advancements that enhance the digital experience for users, ultimately contributing to higher customer satisfaction and retention rates (Ahmadi & Ieamsom, 2022). By fostering a regulatory environment that supports the seamless integration of cutting-edge technologies in service delivery, policymakers can drive improvements in the digital landscape and customer outcomes (Arguello et al., 2020).

6.3 For Marketing and IT Teams

Marketing and IT teams must leverage data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to deliver more personalized services and increase customer retention. By analyzing customer behavior data, these teams can develop targeted strategies that cater to individual preferences, making the customer experience more engaging and tailored (Chepurna & Rialp Criado, 2021). Furthermore, AI-driven solutions can help automate and streamline customer interactions, providing quicker, more accurate responses to queries and improving the overall service experience (Rossi et al., 2021). For IT departments, the focus should be on enhancing platform reliability and ensuring that digital services are both scalable and secure, which is critical for maintaining customer trust in the long term (Willcocks, 2024). By integrating these advanced tools into their operations, telecom companies can create dynamic, data-driven marketing strategies that not only retain customers but also anticipate their future needs.

7. Conclusion

The study provides key insights into the relationship between strategic leadership, e-service quality, and customer retention in the context of digital transformation. As industries, particularly telecommunications, continue to evolve digitally, leadership plays a crucial role in driving innovation, allocating resources, and improving service quality. High-quality e-services, marked by personalization, reliability, and security, are vital to enhancing customer satisfaction and building loyalty. Strategic leaders foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring their organizations can meet the demands of modern digital consumers. E-service quality acts as a crucial mediator, amplifying the positive impact of leadership on customer retention by delivering superior customer experiences and seamless interactions.

However, this conceptual framework lacks empirical validation, which limits its generalizability across different contexts. The proposed relationships and the mediating role of e-service quality require further testing in real-world environments to establish their practical relevance. Future research should focus on empirically examining this framework in various digital sectors, such as e-commerce, banking, and healthcare, where digital services are also critical. Moreover, exploring additional variables like customer engagement and the influence of artificial intelligence (AI) on service automation and personalization could provide deeper insights into factors driving customer loyalty in the digital age. These directions would help refine the theoretical model and offer practical applications for industries navigating digital transformation.

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