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Corporate Social Responsibility Practices and Customer Retention at Airtel Uganda

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Keywords:

Corporate Social
Responsibility,
Customer Retention,
Airtel Uganda,
Telecommunications
Sector.

Purpose: This study investigated the relationship between social, economic, ethical, and legal corporate social responsibility practices and customer retention among Airtel Uganda Limited mobile subscribers. **Methodology:** A descriptive research design was used following a quantitative approach. Data was collected from 336 randomly selected Airtel mobile subscribers from Wakiso district using a self-administered questionnaire. The data was analysed with the help of SPSSv24. The Cronbach's alpha statistic was tested to establish the reliability of the study instrument and a value above 0.70-threshold was obtained on all constructs. Ethical principles were observed during the process of data collection and reporting. **Findings:** The study findings revealed the existence of a moderate positive significant relationship between social, economic, ethical, and legal practices and customer retention ($r = .513$; $r = .553$; $r = .558$; $r = .573$; $p < .01$) respectively. Collectively, the predictor variables explain 42.9% of the variation in customer retention at Airtel Uganda. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that corporate social responsibility practices are instrumental to customer retention at Airtel Uganda. **Recommendations:** It is recommended that Airtel Uganda strengthen its corporate social responsibility activities and ethical practices. There is also a need to strengthen the customer relationship management desk and the business development section to ensure continuous provision of value for money. **Contribution:** This study contributes to the understanding of how corporate social responsibilities that are an expense to a profit-oriented enterprise can be translated to generate more profits for the enterprise in the form of customer retention, especially in the telecommunications sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The last few decades have seen an increase not only in corporate social responsibility (CSR) awareness but also in practice (Carroll, 1999). The CSR practice is one of the ideal ways an organization may enhance its reputation (Hsu, & Bui, 2022; Zhang, & Yang, 2021) and improve its competitive edge (Leong *et al.*, 2022), which is consequently mirrored in a firm's profitability (Cho *et al.*, 2021). Several studies have been conducted to better appreciate the CSR components, and the relationships between their roles, behaviour, and customer perspectives on purchasing intention (Peña-Miranda *et al.*, 2022), the supply chain (Liu *et al.*, 2022) and brand (Tan *et al.*, 2022).

The origins of CSR activities date as far back as the end of the Second World War (Lee *et al.*, 2012; Spector, 2008; Seechi, 2007). In the African context, CSR practices are traced as far back as the old days of the African Traditional Societies, though its prominence in Uganda is dated around the 1950s (Katamba *et al.*, 2015). The CSR concept suggests that business is part of society (Freeman, 1984) and that its existence should be compatible with the requirements and expectations of various stakeholders in society (Freeman *et al.*, 2004; Lantos, 2001; Freeman, 1998). In Uganda, the formal practice of CSR is relatively a new concept mainly practised by multinationals such as telecommunications giants, banks, and others

through philanthropic activities geared towards supporting communities in need. It is increasingly common nowadays to see CSR activity reports on a significant number of financial statements and reports from several companies in Uganda today. Several studies have been conducted on CSR practices (Freeman, 2017; Carroll, 2016). Katamba *et al.* (2016) observed the lack of documentation of the various ethical CSR activities in Uganda.

According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU, 2007), Mobile network subscriptions simply refer to the number of people or users and the associated devices connected to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by cellular technology. The associated indicator includes post-paid subscriptions; and active prepaid accounts, i.e., used during the last three months. The indicators apply to voice mobile-cellular customers/subscribers. It does not however include data subscriptions. Increasingly, the service sector is searching for solutions that match their customer expectations (Lubbe *et al.*, 2021; Ngoma *et al.*, 2020) by integrating CSR activities within their business processes. CSR activities are associated with improving the image of the organization (Wongpitch *et al.*, 2016), boosting customers' perspectives on a particular brand (Tan *et al.*, 2022) and improving customer loyalty (Servera-Frances, & Piqueras-Tomás, 2019). Consequently, this may translate into increased profit margin for the business and societal satisfaction with the business

enterprise operations (Barrena-Martinez *et al.*, 2019; Nelson, & Grayson, 2017).

CSR refers to the activity businesses get involved in to be socially accountable to the public, stakeholders and themselves. Saleh *et al.* (2015) stated that CSR means attainment for (profit) while considering the impact it has on the social aspects and environment (planet) and both internal and external (people), for the accomplishments of the business entity and society, properly balanced, and appropriately implemented. Chatjuthamard *et al.* (2016) confirmed that CSR contributes to required customer behaviour as its implementation leads to a positive impact on customer or consumer repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth. Kwon, & Lee (2021) surveyed Korean consumers and established that while social activities influenced the consumers' purchase intentions, the ethical dimension did not. Jose *et al.* (2018) and Jose *et al.* (2015) concluded that CSR activities affect repurchase intentions positively. In this study, we conceptualize CSR in line with Carroll (1999) to comprise four dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropy.

Customer Retention is an essential aspect of business sustainability in the face of the ever-competitive operating business environment (Afiuc *et al.*, 2020). Customer retention refers to a long-term relationship and commitment that may exist between a business and its customer (Wilson, & Liguori, 2022; Wilson *et al.*, 2021). Retaining an existing customer has been established as the most viable option for attracting a new customer in a mature market (Afiuc *et al.*, 2020). By influencing market value, customer satisfaction, purchase behaviour, as well as customer retention initiatives, CSR implementation can lead to increased firm profitability (Kankam-Kwarteng *et al.*, 2022; Nguyen *et al.*, 2021).

Airtel Uganda Limited owned by Bharti Airtel India in 2010 (Majority shareholder) was born of Celtel Uganda Limited, established in 1995. Celtel

Uganda Limited rebranded itself to Zain Uganda Limited in July 2007, and in 2013, the telecom giant expanded further through the acquisition of Warid Telecom Uganda Limited to become the second largest network after MTN Uganda Limited. The Company's subscriber base has steadily continued to grow with an estimated 9.8 million subscribers by December 2017. The total estimated number of mobile subscriptions in the same year stood at 24,361,551 million (UCC, 2017). Initially, the business operated under three registered entities; namely: (1) Airtel Towers Limited (2) Bharti Airtel Uganda B.V., and (3) Airtel Mobile Commerce. However, Airtel Towers Limited has since transferred to EATON Towers Limited. The headquarters of Airtel Uganda is located in Airtel House, at plot 40 Wampewo Avenue, on Kololo Hill in the Central Division of Kampala. To date, Airtel Uganda enjoys its position as one of the leading telecommunications operators in Uganda, providing voice and data communication services, with an estimated subscriber base of over 10 million out of an estimated total of 28.3 million mobile subscribers (Independent, 2021).

Airtel Uganda Limited has grown to be one of the significant telecommunication service providers in Uganda against circumstances that have seen many telecommunications operators either exit or continue struggling (Independent, 2021). Airtel Uganda Limited aims to align its sustainability strategy with innovation. Bharti Airtel is the mother company of all Airtel subsidiaries across the globe. Bharti Airtel's sustainability strategy is hinged on two pillars of societal empowerment and well-being, which augurs well, with the known intentions of CSR. According to Airtel's CSR manager, the strategic objective of Airtel Uganda Limited's CSR practices is to transform lives. The efforts to empower the community and build a sustainable business are manifested in the green initiatives practised by the enterprise, and support for education, sanitation, and employment among others. Airtel Uganda Limited's CSR practices are

grounded in the areas of Health, Education, and Sports (Charity, 2019). Airtel Uganda Limited considers it of paramount importance and responsibility to contribute towards the well-being of the society in which it conducts its operations.

In 2014, Airtel Uganda supported Kabaka's run with UGX 100,000,000 aimed to support the treatment of fistula patients (Fiona, 2014). In 2017, Airtel Uganda partnered with the Ministry of Health to fundraise for Sickie Cells awareness and treatment. Airtel Uganda partnered with the Buganda Kingdom to sponsor the Kabaka birthday run for the years 2020 to 2022 under the theme; 'Men against acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) to save the girl child'. Previous runs have also been held under the theme; "Men for Good Health and Ending AIDS by 2030 (Javira, 2021). It collaborates with the Federation of Ugandan Football Association (FUFA) to promote sports. Airtel Uganda Limited was the main sponsor of the National Football team- the Cranes in 2017 and pledged a sponsorship deal worth UGX 10 billion for four years ending in 2021 (John, 2017; David, 2017).

CSR activities involve money and thus an expense to a business enterprise (Klutse, 2016). A close analysis of Airtel Uganda Limited's CSR activities indicates that the company has committed approximately UGX 11.4 billion either directly or through partnership in CSR activities since 2014. Despite these large investments in CSR through various activities, Airtel Uganda Limited's subscriber base has not grown enough to become the market leader in the telecommunications industry. As of March 2021, Airtel Uganda Limited continues to trail MTN Uganda Limited as the second leading telecommunications operator in Uganda with a 45.5% market share compared to MTN's 54% market share (Statista, 2023). It is also factual that the number of mobile cellular subscriptions has increased over the years reaching over 30 million mobile cellular subscriptions in the year 2021 (Taylor, 2023). The extent to which the CSR

activities are helping Airtel Uganda to retain its customer base is not yet known. This study therefore sought to investigate empirically the relationship between legal, ethical, economic, and Philanthropic corporate social responsibility practices and customer retention at Airtel Uganda Limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Philanthropic Practices of CSR and Customer Retention

Carroll (1991), considers social practices as the highest level of CSR, measured in terms of philanthropic or generous giving back to society in need. Philanthropic responsibility commits business enterprises to give back to the communities through charity, social causes and active community involvement. Prior studies on CSR and customer retention indicate that social CSR influences loyalty positively and, thus retention (Nareeman, & Hassan, 2013; Gupta, & Pirsch, 2006). CSR activities are also associated with attracting talent to the organization (Wong, 2020; Modak *et al.*, 2020). Results from recent studies suggest that charitable contributions geared towards community development by businesses are positively associated with customer satisfaction, high revenue growth, and retention (Dalla-Pria, & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022; Lev *et al.*, 2010).

An organization that responds to the needs of the community earns reputation and repeat customers. Strategic philanthropists like Góis *et al.* (2020) and Esenyel (2020) have argued that much as philanthropy may not immediately generate an economic gain, it is an essential source of competitive advantage. Philanthropic activities enhance business value through the acquired reputation brought about by the positive association of the customers to the business enterprise. (Şehirli, 2021) found a positive association between clients who speak well of the business and customer retention. From the reviewed literature, we set the hypothesis "H₀₁: Philanthropic practices have

statistically no significant influence on customer retention of Airtel subscribers in Wakiso district”.

Carroll's Theory

Carroll (1979) defines CSR as the whole collection of obligations a business entity owes to society, entailing the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary societal anticipations of an organization. Probably the most popular CSR theory by Carroll (1991) is that businesses have a responsibility to a wider range of stakeholders and the environment besides profit and wealth generation for the shareholders. Carroll, & Shabana (2010) contextualize CSR as focusing on the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (Social) dimensions. This includes but is not limited to payment of taxes and adhering to ethical business practices devoid of consumer exploitation. The economic dimension aligns with the need for a business to earn acceptable returns to the shareholders to ensure business sustainability. The ethical/legal dimension relates to the obligations of the business to operate within the law. The social dimension stresses the need for the business to better the lives of society (Mohammed, & Rashid, 2018). This theory is applied to the current study as it explains the necessity of the business to take care of the triple bottom line. That is the need to earn profits in a sustainable way that puts into context the needs of all stakeholders. We hypothesize that businesses that do maintain a triple bottom line are more likely to attract and retain their customers. When customers are happy with the business dealings of a given enterprise, they are more likely to make repeat purchases as well as act as ambassadors of the organization's products.

Economic Practices of CSR and Customer Retention

The CSR economic dimension is measured in terms of continuous profits generated for the business, and stakeholders, and the maximization of wealth for stakeholders while maintaining efficiency (Carroll, 1991). The economic responsibility of the business

enterprise is to earn profits in a sustainable way that benefits the society in which the enterprise is set. Lee *et al.*, (2012) established that economic CRS practices are associated with trust leading to customer retention. The determining factors of the economic dimension of CSR practices such as fairness in pricing have a positive effect on customer retention (Mohammad *et al.*, 2012; Hanif *et al.*, 2010). Fair economic practices are related to customer satisfaction. Research studies indicate the existence of a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and retention (Singh *et al.*, 2021; Syah, & Wijoyo, 2021; Javed *et al.*, 2021). Research posits a positive relationship between quality of service, customer satisfaction, and retention (Alafi, & Hasoneh, 2012; Jung *et al.*, 2022; Mestre *et al.*, 2022).

The economic CSR factors are viewed to be operationally efficient regarding mobile telecommunication services (Yuan *et al.*, 2020) measured in terms of fast responses, waiting time, and cost efficiency. (Yang, & Basile, 2022; Luo, & Du, 2015) Found a significant relationship between operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and retention. Rastini, & Nurcaya (2019) established a positive relationship between CSR economic practices and customer satisfaction, and subsequently customer loyalty. We hence set the hypothesis “H₀₂: Economic practices have statistically no significant influence on customer retention of Airtel subscribers in Wakiso district”.

Ethical Practices of CSR and Customer Retention

The ethical dimension of CSR considers the ethical norms, as well as values that the businesses identify with (Carroll, 1991). The businesses' continued commitment to addressing ethical challenges gives a sense of responsibility to a common cause. The ethical obligation of businesses dwells around just and fair practices in all business operations. It also includes fair treatment of its employees, setting justifiable wages and product prices as well as

sourcing materials from ethically responsible suppliers. The ethical practices of business employees, such as honesty and integrity, are associated with positively influencing customer intentions, satisfaction, and retention (Yang, & Basile, 2022; Luo, & Du, 2015). We thus hypothesize “H₀₃: Ethical practices have statistically no significant influence on customer retention of Airtel subscribers in Wakiso district”.

Legal Practices of CSR and Customer Retention

The legal dimension of CSR is manifested through the extent to which a business aligns and operates within the requirements of the relevant national laws and regulations (Carroll, 1991). Extant research does not consider compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements as an act of CSR practice, and as such has no impact on customer satisfaction, loyalty (Lee *et al.*, 2012), and consequently customer retention. Other researchers do hold the positive influence the legal dimension has on user satisfaction and retention (Galbreath, 2010; Onlaori, & Rotchanakitumnuai, 2010). Customer retention is enhanced when businesses are compliant with the established regulations meant to protect society and the consumer (Sehirli, 2021; Onlaori, & Rotchanakitumnuai, 2010). On the contrary, Nareeman, & Hassan (2013) established a negative relationship between legal CSR practices and customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention. We set the hypothesis “H₀₄: Legal practices have statistically no significant influence on customer retention of Airtel subscribers in Wakiso district”.

The motivation behind the increase in CSR engagement and practices by telecommunications companies has not been studied as far as the available literature is concerned. Most research on the CSR subject is inclined to developed countries (Jamali *et al.*, 2020; Bayoud *et al.*, 2012) justifying to conduct studies to help understand the CSR practices in developing nations (Jamali, & Karam, 2016). The numerous studies on CSR in Uganda (Katamba *et al.*, 2016; Bwambale, 2014; Nkiko,

2013; Katamba *et al.*, 2012; Basheka, *et al.*, 2011) are all outside the telecommunications sector. None of these studies pays specific attention to investigating the influence of CRS practices on customer retention in the telecommunications industry. This research, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between CSR practices and customer retention of Airtel mobile subscribers in Wakiso district, Uganda.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

In this study, we adopted a descriptive research design that allows the gathering of information regarding the status while avoiding interpretations or judgments (Creswell, 2013). The design allows the researcher the opportunity to study in detail and obtain an accurate picture of the characteristics of a given population.

Unit of Analysis and Inquiry

The unit of analysis is Airtel Uganda Limited, Airtel Towers, Plot 15A Clement Hill Rd, Kampala, Central Business District (CBD). The unit of inquiry is the Airtel subscribers in Wakiso district, Uganda.

Study Population and Sample Selection

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) estimated a total number of 33.1 million mobile subscribers in Uganda (UCC4Q22 Report, 2022). The Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) report published in September 2022, estimated Airtel Uganda Limited's market share at 45.1% translating to 13.6 million mobile subscriptions, by 2022 (GSMA, 2022). There was no readily available statistical information on the number of Airtel mobile subscribers at the district level either in the public domain or with Airtel's marketing team when contacted. Wakiso district is estimated to have over 3.3 million inhabitants (UBOS, 2022). The district is strategically located in the central region of the country, which is a hot spot for competition about enrolling new mobile

subscriptions and driving efforts to retain customers. From the informal interaction with Airtel's CSR manager, it is estimated that Airtel has over 1, 000, 0000 subscribers in the Wakiso district. Using the formula $n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{E^2}$ to obtain a desired minimum sample size for a random sample, we set the confidence level at 95% with a margin of error at 5% to arrive at the sample size of 384. The actual respondents are randomly selected from the Airtel subscriber register/database. The subscriber numbers were written on yellow cards, placed in an envelope, shuffled, and withdrawn without replacement equivalent to the sampled number.

Data Sources

This study used both secondary and primary data. The main instrument of data collection was the self-administered questionnaire (SAQ). The SAQ is quick, simple, and offers an accessible way to collect information from a predetermined group of individuals (Leavy, 2017). It limits the possibility of biases during the data collection.

Measurement of Variables

The measurement scale for the variables in this study was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree (5)" to "Strongly disagree (1)". The study variables were operationalized in this research as follows: The social and economic dimensions of CSR followed (Jung, 2012; Chung *et al.*, 2015). The ethical and legal dimensions of CSR followed (Jung, 2012; Chung *et al.*, 2015) respectively. The customer retention draws from (Casalo *et al.*, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Berne *et al.*, 2001, Syaqirah, & Faizurrahman, 2014). To aid our interpretation of the study findings, we take a cut of 3.5 to represent agreement and below 2.4 to represent disagreement. The scores between 2.5 and 3.4 are interpreted as being neutral on the item at hand.

Data Quality Control

The collected data was reviewed to establish inconsistencies or errors. To establish the internal

consistency of the study constructs, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was estimated. Researchers recommend an acceptable cut-off point of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978). For all our study constructs, we obtained a minimum alpha of 0.70, which implies the consistency of our study instrument. The data collected was processed and analyzed using SPSSv24. We analyze descriptive statistics using frequencies, mean, and standard deviation. We perform correlations to determine the relationships between the independent variables and the criterion variable, while regression analysis is performed to establish the extent to which the predictor variables explain the criterion variable under study.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

174 (52%) of the respondents were males while 162 (48%) were females. The majority of the respondents were below 45 years of age (289/86%) while 47 (14%) were above 45 years of age. 117 (35%) of the respondents had attained a certificate level of education, 146 (44%) had attained a diploma level of education and 73 (21%) had attained a graduate level of education. The majority of the respondents 185 (55%) had used the Airtel line for over five years.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics that included; Mean and Standard deviation were used to determine the level to which the variables are used in Airtel Uganda Limited mobile telecommunication. The mean score has been associated with a typical response among respondents, while the standard deviation is noted to be an indicator of the consistency with which the particular mean scores were made (Sekaran, 2005). Consequently, small values for the standard deviation are indicative of high levels of

consistency and large values are an indication of low levels of consistency.

Social Practices

According to Airtel's CSR manager, the strategic objective of Airtel Uganda Limited's CSR practices is to transform lives. This is achieved through the various philanthropic/social activities performed by the company including support for education and health camps (Charity, 2019). The research findings revealed overall agreement among the respondents on Airtel social initiatives though with a wide variation in opinion (Mean 3.5, SD 1.1). Specifically, Airtel is involved in supporting the local community (Mean 3.7, SD 1.0) as well as local non-profit organizations (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1). Airtel is involved in supporting education activities (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1) and the disadvantaged (Mean 3.5, SD 1.0). The respondents were neutral as far as Airtel's activities are in supporting health aspects (Mean 3.4, SD 1.3). The findings support the assertions of the Airtel CSR manager of Airtel's involvement in various social activities as part of attaining the strategic CSR objective. The involvement in social activities is in line with the authors (Dalla-Pria, & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022; Góis *et al.*, 2020; Esenyel, 2020). Though CSR activities may not lead to immediate economic gain as it increases the cost of the enterprise (Klutse, 2016), they endear the enterprise to the community (Hsu, & Bui, 2022; Zhang, & Yang, 2021). When the community identifies with an enterprise, they are more likely to support its activities. This may finally translate into increased customer base.

Economic Practices

Airtel Uganda Limited aims to align its sustainability strategy with innovation (Bharti Airtel Limited, 2015). An innovative organization strives to surprise its customers with new product offerings and quality services that endear the customers to its cause. The study findings revealed overall agreement albeit with wide variations in opinion (Mean 3.6, SD 1.0).

The general opinion is that Airtel offers fair prices for its products (Mean 3.7, SD 1.0) and has a well-established complaint management system (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1). To serve its clients better, emphasis is placed on the provision of quality services (Mean 3.5, SD 0.9) where continuous improvement of the various product offerings is the norm (Mean 3.6, SD 1.0). Research findings associate quality services with improved customer retention (Jung *et al.*, 2022; Mestre *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, Airtel is maintaining a strong competitive position (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1). These results are testimony of the ability of Airtel to withstand the very competitive business environment in the telecommunications industry that has seen several players falling off, but Airtel is still in the chase as the second leading telecommunications operator in the country (Statista, 2023).

Ethical Practices

The ethical dimension of CSR considers the ethical norms, as well as values that the businesses identify with (Carroll, 1991). It is all about fair business dealings that desist from consumer exploitation. The study findings revealed overall agreement albeit with wide variation in opinion (Mean 3.5, SD 1.0). The respondents agreed though varied in opinion that Airtel prioritize ethical practices in its business dealings. Airtel is involved in the prevention of ethical pollution (Mean 3.7, SD 0.95); makes use of renewable resources (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1); promotes recycling (Mean 3.5, SD 0.95) and supports energy-saving activities (Mean 3.5, SD 1.0). These findings support Airtel's claims on greening initiatives (Charity, 2019). The benefits of ethical business practices are echoed in (Yang, & Basile, 2022; Luo, & Du, 2015) as key in customer retention efforts.

Legal Practices

Businesses must be compliant with existing legislation in their operational environment (Carroll, 1991). The findings revealed overall that Airtel conducts its activities in line with the

established regulatory framework (Mean 3.7, SD 1.0). In compliance with the law, Airtel is providing quality telecommunication services (Mean 3.8, SD 1.0) that ensure value for money (Mean 3.8, SD 1.0). The operations of Airtel are compliant with the regulatory guidelines (Mean 3.7, SD 1.0) such as the conduct of legitimate promotional activities (Mean 3.6, SD 1.1) and protecting the privacy of the subscribers (Mean 3.7, SD 0.98). By being compliant with the established regulatory framework, the clientele is endeared to an organization, which in the long run may improve customer retention (Şehirli, 2021).

Customer Retention

Retaining an existing customer is a preferred viable option than attracting a new customer in a mature market (Afiuc *et al.*, 2020). We explore the existence of customer retention initiatives at Airtel Uganda and find consensus (Mean 3.6, SD 0.8). The existing Airtel customers are willing to recommend Airtel services to friends (Mean 4, SD 0.8) and do so without any reservations (Mean 4, SD 0.9). The customers are willing to continue using the Airtel line because of its perceived low user fees (Mean 3.8, SD 0.89) and promote the Airtel brand among family and friends by word of mouth (Mean 3.8, SD 0.96). This is very positive for the Airtel brand as word of mouth is positively associated with customer retention (Jung *et al.*, 2022; Mestre *et al.*, 2022; Şehirli, 2021). The findings revealed variation in opinion for the continued use of Airtel services in line with its CSR activities (Mean 3.8, SD 1.0). This may be explained by the latent complaints some respondents have against the company (Mean 3.6, SD 0.9).

It was revealed by the respondents that it would be a betrayal for them to switch to another telecommunication service provider (Mean 3.5, SD 0.9). The respondents were however neutral on considering Airtel as their first choice (Mean 3.4, SD 0.7) and using Airtel services for more business opportunities (Mean 3.4, SD 0.8). Neutral responses were revealed for joining Airtel concerning customer care and CSR activities (Mean 3.2, SD 0.7) and the probability of terminating allegiance to Airtel in the next few months (Mean 3.4, SD 0.7). The neutral responses are an indication of the need for Airtel to do more that can help patronize their clientele. The informal interaction with the Airtel CSR manager revealed Airtel's commitment to serve the community better through the CSR activities that have not only helped the enterprise retain but also grow its clientele over the years. In particular, the quality of service, continuous improvement, innovation and management of customer complaints were identified among the major efforts geared towards customer retention and the consequent improvement of business sustainability. What the CSR manager revealed is in support of (Yuan *et al.*, 2020) who associate economic CSR with operational efficiency.

Inferential Analysis

Correlational Analysis

In this analysis, we determine the extent to which changes in customer retention are associated with changes in social, economic, ethical, and legal practices. To quantify the strength of the relationship between the variables, the study used Pearson's coefficient. The results are summarized in Table 1

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Philanthropic/social practices (1)	1				
Economic practices (2)	.623**	1			
Ethical practices (3)	.419**	.614**	1		
Legal practices (4)	.678**	.710**	.578**	1	
Customer Retention (5)	.513**	.553**	.558**	.573**	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results in Table 1 indicate the existence of a moderate positive significant relationship between social, economic, ethical and legal practices and customer retention ($r = .513$; $r = .553$; $r = .558$; $r = .573$; $p < .01$) respectively. This means that our predictor variables under study have a positive moderate relationship with customer retention at Airtel Uganda Limited in the Wakiso district.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: Social practices have statistically no significant relationship with customer retention of Airtel subscribers in the Wakiso district. The results revealed ($r = .513$, $p < .01$). We reject the null and adopt the alternative hypothesis. The positive significant relationship between social CSR and customer retention is in support of earlier findings by (Dalla-Pria, & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022; Wong, 2020; Modak *et al.*, 2020).

H₀₂: Economic practices have statistically no significant relationship with customer retention of Airtel subscribers in the Wakiso district. The results revealed ($r = .553$, $p < .01$). We reject the null and adopt the alternative hypothesis. The positive significant relationship between economic CSR and customer retention echoes earlier studies done by (Singh *et al.*, 2021; Syah, & Wijoyo, 2021; Javed *et al.*, 2021).

H₀₃: Ethical practices have statistically no significant relationship with customer retention of

Airtel subscribers in the Wakiso district. The results revealed ($r = .558$, $p < .01$). We reject the null and adopt the alternative hypothesis. The positive significant relationship between ethical CSR and customer retention is in line with (Yang, & Basile, 2022; Luo, & Du, 2015).

H₀₄: Legal practices have statistically no significant relationship with customer retention of Airtel subscribers in the Wakiso district. The results revealed ($r = .573$, $p < .01$). We reject the null and adopt the alternative hypothesis. The positive significant relationship between legal CSR and customer retention affirms earlier research findings (Sehirli, 2021; Onlaori, & Rotchanakitumnui, 2010). The findings are however contrary to (Lee *et al.*, 2012) who found no impact between legal CSR and customer retention and Nareeman, & Hassan (2013) who found the relationship to be negative.

Regression Analysis

After establishing positive significant associations between the predictor and the dependent variables, we proceeded to perform the higher-order analytical statistics (Regression analysis) to ensure the robustness of our results. We perform a multiple regression to establish the contribution of the predictor variables in explaining the response variable and the multi-collinearity tests to ensure our results are free from multi-collinearity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coeff		Std Coeff	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.068	0.097		21.42	0		
Social practices	0.089	0.028	0.184	3.14	0.002	0.50	2.01
Economic practices	0.064	0.035	0.121	1.85	0.065	0.40	2.50
Ethical practices	0.171	0.031	0.296	5.47	0	0.58	1.72
Legal practices	0.098	0.034	0.191	2.85	0.003	0.38	2.64

Model Summary

R = .660

R square = .435

Adjusted R Square = .429

R square change = .436

Sig. F change = .000

Std. error estimate = .31441

DV: Customer retention

The regression model indicates that the predictor variables explain 42.9% of the variation in customer retention of Airtel subscribers in the Wakiso district. The regression model, Table 2, revealed that all our predictor variables have a moderate positive relationship with the response variable. The order of importance is revealed as ethical CSR (beta = .296, $p < .01$); legal CSR (beta = .191, $p < .01$); social CSR (beta = .184, $p < .01$) and economic CSR (beta = .121, p -value = .065, $p > .01$). The relative importance of the ethical CSR about other CSRs under study emphasize the need for honest business dealings and is in line with (Yang, & Basile, 2022; Luo, & Du, 2015). The findings revealed that for every one standard deviation increase in ethical CSR, customer retention at Airtel Uganda is likely to increase by 0.296 standard deviations, assuming all other variables are held constant.

To ensure our model does not fall prey to multi-collinearity, we perform a multi-collinearity test and the results are presented in Table 2. The statistical standard is that the VIF must be less than 10 and the Tolerance Value must be greater than 0.1. The VIFs for all our variables are less than 10 and the Tolerance Values are all greater than 0.1 implying that our model is free from multi-collinearity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to investigate the relationship between legal, ethical, economic, and social corporate social responsibility practices and customer retention at Airtel Uganda Limited. The study findings have revealed that legal, ethical, economic and social CSR practices are positively and significantly related to customer retention at Airtel Uganda Limited in Wakiso district. All the predictor variables studied have a moderate positive relationship with the response variables. This implies that Airtel Uganda is set to continue benefiting from its CSR activities. Among the CSR variables studied, the practices related to ethical CSR seem to confer more benefits about customer retention in the Wakiso district compared to other CSRs.

The study concludes that CSR activities are key to customer retention at Airtel Uganda. CSR activities such as fair business practices like fair pricing, honest dealings and integrity should be upheld as key values of Airtel Uganda. The economic CSR practices driven by continuous improvement and all efforts aimed to deliver value for money to Airtel clientele should be prioritized. Airtel Uganda is

compliant with the regulatory framework of the telecommunication services in the country. This should be upheld, as most customers tend to associate with enterprises that deal in legitimate activities. The CSR activities have not only helped Airtel to retain its customer base but also to attract new customers.

It is recommended that Airtel Uganda strengthen its ethical practices, especially fair dealings and greening efforts as the world becomes more and more environment sensitive. Whereas most respondents expressed continued commitment to Airtel services, there were indications that grey areas that cause dissatisfaction to customers do exist. We therefore recommend Airtel Uganda strengthen its customer complaint management desk by not only focusing on revealed complaints but also seeking out informally unexpressed complaints. This can be achieved through increased opportunities for community interaction. The telecommunication sector is a very competitive sector with very rapid technological changes. To remain competitive, Airtel Uganda should strengthen the research and development section or the business development section to keenly study the market trends and aim to be market leaders rather than market followers. The enterprise should constantly benchmark with the best not only in the region but also in the global market if it is to attain the number one position in the market.

This study is limited in design being mainly a quantitative study and cross-sectional. It mainly concentrated on Wakiso district one of the key markets for Airtel services. It is recommended that a more comprehensive study covering all the districts where Airtel services are offered be conducted. A study that adopts a qualitative approach to study in-depth the customer purchase intentions of Airtel services is recommended. The predictor variables explained 42.9% of the variation in customer retention at Airtel Uganda. A study exploring more factors for customer retention at

Airtel Uganda or the telecommunication industry is recommended.

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