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College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and  
Communications

School of Journalism and Communications

**MARKET PENETRATION COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN  
THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF  
SAFARICOM'S OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIA**

A Thesis Submitted to School of Journalism and Communications in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirement of Degree of Master of Art in

Public Relations and Strategic Communications

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**Declaration**

I, Solomon Dagne, hereby declare that this thesis entitled MARKET PENETRATION COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF SAFARICOM'S OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIA is entirely my own work. All sources used or referred to have been properly cited and acknowledged. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

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## **Abstract**

This research paper examines Safaricom Ethiopia's communication strategies and their impact on customer engagement and growth within the Ethiopian telecommunications market. The study integrates data from interviews with Safaricom representatives and feedback from 20 customer questionnaires to provide a nuanced understanding of the company's strategic effectiveness.

The analysis reveals that Safaricom's use of traditional media, such as TV and radio, effectively reaches older demographics, while social media platforms are instrumental in engaging younger audiences. Despite a generally favorable view, with 45% of respondents rating the communication as effective, 25% remained neutral, indicating potential gaps in messaging and the need for more targeted strategies. The promotion's success is further highlighted by a significant portion of customers joining in the past six months, showcasing effective outreach but underscoring the necessity for ongoing customer retention efforts.

The study identifies challenges such as the need for improved network coverage in rural areas and the requirement for more culturally localized messaging. Opportunities include leveraging digital platforms and competitive pricing to enhance customer acquisition and retention. The research also acknowledges the positive impact of Safaricom's CSR initiatives on brand reputation. Overall, the findings offer valuable insights for refining Safaricom's communication strategies to better align with market expectations and improve overall effectiveness.

## UNIT ONE

### **1. Introduction**

This research delves into the foundational elements necessary to understand the context and strategies of market penetration within the telecommunication industry, focusing specifically on Safaricom's activities in Ethiopia. It begins by presenting a comprehensive background of the telecommunication industry, outlining its global and regional significance, and the competitive landscape in which Safaricom operates. Following this, the study explores the theoretical framework surrounding market penetration and communication strategies, drawing on existing literature to highlight key concepts and models that will inform the analysis.

Subsequently, this research provides an in-depth overview of Safaricom, including its history, core competencies, and strategic objectives. It examines the company's motivations for entering the Ethiopian market, considering both internal goals and external market conditions. Additionally, it outlines the research methodology, detailing the qualitative approaches employed to gather and analyze data. By setting this comprehensive foundation, the research prepares the ground for subsequent analysis and discussion, ensuring a thorough understanding of the various factors influencing Safaricom's market penetration strategy in Ethiopia.

## **2. Background of the study**

Safaricom, a leading telecommunications company in Kenya, is renowned for its innovation in mobile services and its significant impact on the country's communication landscape. Formed in 1997 as a fully owned subsidiary of Telkom Kenya, its primary objective was to offer mobile phone services. Officially established in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Vodafone became a partial shareholder while the Kenyan government retained the majority stake (Park, 2021). The company launched operations in 2000, providing mobile services to Kenyan consumers.

In 2002, Vodafone Group Plc acquired a 40% stake in Safaricom, facilitating the expansion of its services and infrastructure. This partnership brought in expertise and investment crucial for Safaricom's growth. A pivotal moment came in 2007 with the launch of M-Pesa, which revolutionized the mobile money transfer industry. M-Pesa provided a simple and secure way for customers to transfer money using their mobile phones (Hughes, 2007). It transformed financial services in Kenya by enabling users to send and receive money, pay bills, and access other financial services through their mobile devices, becoming a global model for mobile-based financial services.

Throughout the 2010s, Safaricom continued to expand its services, offering a variety of mobile, voice, data, and financial products. The company invested heavily in network infrastructure, enhancing coverage and service quality across Kenya. Innovation remained a key focus, with Safaricom introducing new services and forming partnerships to meet the evolving needs of consumers (Hughes, 2007). Safaricom emerged as the market leader in Kenya, dominating with a substantial customer base. Beyond commercial success, the company made significant contributions to society through various corporate social responsibility initiatives, particularly in healthcare, education, and community development.

In recent years, Safaricom has further expanded its offerings, including advancements in digital services, partnerships in e-commerce, and investments in technology to support its network infrastructure (Mas, 2010). This continuous growth and innovation have solidified Safaricom's position as a transformative force in Kenya's telecommunication industry.

Throughout its history, Safaricom has played a pivotal role in transforming communication and financial services in Kenya. M-Pesa, in particular, has been a groundbreaking service,

showcasing how mobile technology can significantly impact people's lives, especially in areas with limited access to traditional banking services.

This paper is keen to find out how Safaricom manages to penetrate the Ethiopian telecom market and the communication strategies it is using to cope with new challenges emerged from the Ethiopian market which is typically different from the Kenyan one where it was super successful.

### **3. Statement of the problem**

The telecommunications industry is pivotal in fostering economic growth and social development, particularly in emerging markets. However, achieving successful market penetration in new regions presents significant challenges. Safaricom, a leading telecommunications provider in Kenya, has embarked on an expansion into Ethiopia, a market with immense potential but also substantial barriers to entry. Despite Safaricom's established reputation and innovative service offerings, its success in the Ethiopian market is not guaranteed due to factors such as regulatory hurdles, competitive dynamics, and the need to effectively communicate and engage with a diverse consumer base.

This research aims to address the problem of understanding and evaluating Safaricom's market penetration communication strategy in Ethiopia. Specifically, it seeks to identify the key challenges Safaricom faces in this new market, analyze the effectiveness of its communication strategies in overcoming these challenges, and assess the overall impact on its market performance. By examining these aspects, the research will provide insights into the critical components of a successful market penetration strategy in the telecommunications sector, offering valuable lessons for other companies seeking to expand into similar markets.

## **4. Aims and Objectives:**

### **4.1 General Objective:**

The aim of this research is to investigate and evaluate Safaricom's market penetration communication strategies within Ethiopia's telecommunication industry, assessing their effectiveness in establishing a strong market presence and achieving sustainable growth.

### **4.2 Specific Objectives:**

1. To analyze the different communication channels and platforms utilized by Safaricom in their market penetration efforts in Ethiopia.
2. To assess the effectiveness of Safaricom's communication strategies in reaching and engaging the target audience in Ethiopia.
3. To evaluate the impact of Safaricom's communication strategies on market share and customer loyalty in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry.

#### **4.2.1 Research Questions:**

1. What specific communication channels and platforms does Safaricom employ in their market penetration efforts in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?
2. How effective are Safaricom's communication strategies in reaching and engaging the target audience in Ethiopia?
3. What is the impact of Safaricom's communication strategies on market share and customer loyalty in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?

## **5. Significance of the study**

This study of Safaricom's market penetration strategies in Ethiopia provides valuable academic insights into the telecommunications industry's market entry strategies. It offers a detailed case study that contributes to the literature on how companies adapt their communication strategies when entering new markets. By analyzing Safaricom's approaches, successes, and challenges, this research adds empirical data that scholars, researchers, and students can use to understand and develop market entry strategies and communication tactics in diverse contexts.

## **6. Scope of the study**

This study aims to investigate the market penetration communication strategy employed by Safaricom in its operations in Ethiopia, with a specific focus on its effectiveness in engaging and retaining customers in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa. By conducting in-depth interviews with a sample of 15 to 30 participants from a target population of 150,000 Safaricom customers, the research seeks to identify the various communication strategies used by Safaricom, assess their effectiveness, and uncover any challenges encountered in their implementation. The study will provide valuable insights into how Safaricom can enhance its communication efforts to improve customer engagement and increase its market share in the Ethiopian telecommunications industry.

The scope of this study encompasses evaluating the current communication strategies of Safaricom, understanding customer perceptions and experiences, and identifying key challenges and areas for improvement. Through a qualitative approach, the research will collect detailed data via semi-structured interviews, which will be analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and themes. The findings will offer practical recommendations for Safaricom and other telecom companies aiming to penetrate the Ethiopian market more effectively. The study is significant as it will contribute to the broader understanding of effective market penetration strategies in the telecommunications sector, particularly in emerging markets like Ethiopia.

## **7. Limitation of the study**

This study faces some limitations. Firstly, as Safaricom is the first international firm to enter the Ethiopian telecom market, there is a scarcity of existing academic and industry research specifically analyzing its communication strategies in this context. This limits the availability of secondary data and comparable benchmarks. Additionally, the recent entry of Safaricom means there is limited historical data available to analyze long-term impacts.

Secondly, there is a general lack of comprehensive studies on communication strategies within the Ethiopian telecom market, making it difficult to contextualize Safaricom's strategies against local practices or understand the competitive landscape. Accessing reliable and detailed local data on communication strategies used by other players is also challenging.

# UNIT TWO

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Telecommunication Industry Overview:

**Historical Evolution:** The history of telecommunication spans through centuries from ancient methods of sending smoke signals and using carrier pigeons to the sophisticated, interconnected digital networks of the modern world. The story begins with early human attempts to communicate across distances, where civilizations employed various means such as drum beats, smoke signals, and messenger pigeons to convey messages.

The 19th century witnessed a monumental leap forward with the invention of the telegraph, allowing electrical signals to be transmitted over long distances. This revolutionary technology coupled with Samuel Morse's creation of Morse Code, standardized communication and set the stage for rapid advancements in long-distance messaging. Samuel Morse's invention of the Morse code revolutionized long-distance communication, laying the groundwork for the communications revolution (Silva, 2016).

The iconic invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876 transformed communication by enabling the transmission of voice over wires. Telecommunications began in the first half of the 19th century with the invention of the telegraph, the modern era started in 1876 with Alexander Graham Bell's patent of the telephone (Tanenbaum, 1993).

The turn of the 20th century brought about further breakthroughs in telecommunications with the development of wireless communication by visionaries like Guglielmo Marconi. Marconi's legacy in telecommunications continues to be celebrated, with his work being described as the foundation of early wireless communication systems (Simons, 1996). This innovation evolved into radio communication, allowing messages to be transmitted without the need for physical connections, leading to significant strides in maritime communication and broadcasting.

Television emerged as a dominant force in the mid-20th century, allowing for the transmission of moving images and audio signals across the airwaves, revolutionizing entertainment and news dissemination. Spigel (2008) and Roper (1978) both highlight its rapid penetration into American

homes, with Spigel noting its role in shaping everyday life and contributing to societal shifts. Roper also underscores its increasing public approval and influence, particularly during times of change and uncertainty. Simultaneously, the launch of artificial satellites in space opened doors to global communication, enabling the relay of signals between distant locations. The launch of artificial satellites has been a significant milestone in space exploration, with the first successful launch occurring in 1957 (Hagen, 1956).

The digital revolution marked a pivotal moment, revolutionizing telecommunications with the advent of fiber optics, digital signal processing, and computer networks. The internet, a global network of interconnected computers, became a transformative force, enabling the exchange of information, multimedia, and real-time communication on an unprecedented scale. The interconnection of computers for global communication has significant sociological implications (McNurlin, 1985).

Mobile communication made its debut in the late 20th century, transitioning from analog to digital technology. Mobile phones evolved into smartphones, offering not just voice calls but internet access, messaging, and a myriad of applications, transforming the way people connect and access information. This shift was a significant development, as it marked the beginning of a wave of personal technologies that transformed individuals' perceptions and interactions (Townsend, 2001).

The subsequent rise of broadband internet in the late 20th century and early 2000s allowed high-speed data transmission, facilitating faster access to information and services. The ongoing development of 5G technology promises even faster speeds, reduced latency, and increased connectivity for a multitude of devices, shaping the future landscape of telecommunications. Furthermore, 5G is expected to provide ultra-reliable wireless technology with low latency, making it suitable for a wide range of applications (Dudda, 2020)

The global telecommunications market was estimated at approximately \$1.6 trillion USD in 2022, with expectations of steady growth at around 5% annually in the coming years, according to Statista. The industry is characterized by several notable trends. One prominent trend is the increasing demand for data services, driven by online activities, streaming, remote work, IoT devices, and cloud applications. This surge in data consumption has led to the expansion of

energy-intensive data centers, which are now stabilizing their energy use through efficiency measures and cloud service adoption (Shehabi, 2018).

Another key development is the shift towards 5G technology, which is set to revolutionize mobile connectivity. The global rollout of 5G networks aims to provide significantly faster speeds, reduced latency, and enhanced connectivity to support emerging technologies like IoT, augmented reality, and autonomous vehicles (Pathare, 2022; Dudda, 2020). Additionally, telecommunications companies are undergoing significant digital transformations, integrating AI, machine learning, and automation into various aspects of their operations to improve efficiency and service delivery (Tang, 2021).

The telecommunications industry also plays a crucial role across multiple sectors, including data centers (Dai, 2014), energy utilities, healthcare, public safety, defense, transportation, and finance (Acharya, 2011). The rise of IoT devices, from smart home appliances to industrial sensors, is driving the need for robust telecommunications infrastructure capable of handling vast amounts of data. This demand is closely linked to the development of 5G technology, which promises to support next-generation smart systems (Shafique, 2020). Moreover, telecom operators are increasingly offering cloud-based services such as computing, storage, and SaaS solutions, reshaping the IT landscape and addressing businesses' needs for scalability and agility (Schaper, 2010).

The industry operates within a comprehensive regulatory framework managed by both governmental and independent bodies, which ensure fair competition, consumer protection, and innovation while regulating market entry, pricing, spectrum allocation, and service quality (Kiessling, 1998). Challenges such as regulatory complexities, infrastructure limitations in remote areas, cybersecurity threats, and market saturation are prevalent. However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth through expansion into underserved regions, diversification of services, and the adoption of emerging technologies like 5G and AI, which can drive significant advancements and enhance operational efficiency (Rantala, 2004; Tang, 2021).

## **2.2. Market Penetration Strategies:**

Market penetration strategy involves increasing market share and sales within an existing market by either selling more to current customers or attracting new ones from competitors (Tien, 2020). It's a crucial approach for businesses aiming to strengthen their presence and competitiveness. Marketing strategy, on the other hand, encompasses various facets such as product development, promotion, distribution, pricing, and relationship management (Sumalatha, 2019). It serves as the blueprint guiding organizations in achieving their objectives and staying ahead in the market. Effective marketing strategies, as highlighted by Vishnu (2019), not only align with corporate missions and goals but are also seamlessly integrated into the overall firm strategy. Such integration ensures that marketing efforts are synchronized with broader business objectives, maximizing their impact and value.

The primary objective of market penetration strategy is to gain a larger portion of the target market by increasing customer adoption and usage. This can be achieved through various tactics, including:

**Lowering prices:** Offering competitive pricing compared to competitors can attract price-sensitive customers who may switch brands for cost savings (Sumalatha, 2019; Vishnu, 2019).

**Increasing marketing efforts:** Implementing targeted advertising campaigns, promotions, and other marketing activities helps create awareness about the brand's products/services among potential buyers (Sudharshan, 1995; Armstrong, 1997).

**Expanding distribution channels:** By making products available in more locations (physical stores/online platforms), businesses can reach wider audiences thus increasing chances for trial purchase decisions (Vishnu, 2019).

**Enhancing product features or quality:** Improving product attributes such as functionality, design, performance etc., can make it more appealing than competitor offerings leading increased demand (Sudharshan, 1995; Armstrong, 1997).

**Providing better customer support/service:** Delivering exceptional customer experiences through superior after-sales support, efficient complaint resolution processes etc., helps build loyalty & advocacy which ultimately drives repeat purchases (Sumalatha, 2019; Vishnu, 2019).

**Innovating packaging /brand positioning:** Refreshed packaging designs, repositioned branding messages help capture attention stand out from competition while reinforcing value proposition associated with affordable options. By implementing these strategies effectively companies aim not only increase their overall sales volume but also establish stronger foothold within their respective markets (Sudharshan, 1995; Armstrong, 1997). As globalization brings individual nations closer like never before, the desire of Multinational Enterprises to expand their business crossing borders has been growing substantially over the years.

As for (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006) Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) expand globally, taking products and brands to new markets in emerging economies. They create product and brand portfolios that match competences with local needs. A multi-tier strategy with local and/or global brands provides wide market reach and potential leadership. However, it requires a combination of global and local resources.

Market penetration refers to the efforts made by a company to maintain or expand its market share for existing products. This is accomplished through various competitive strategies such as adjusting pricing, implementing advertising and sales promotion campaigns, and allocating more resources to personal selling. The ultimate goal of market penetration is to establish a dominant position in the market by increasing product usage and attracting more consumers (Tien, 2020)

Market penetration is a growth strategy where a business focuses on selling existing products in existing markets. The objectives of market penetration include increasing market share, raising sales revenue without changing products or services, and implementing strategies like sales offers, increased distribution, and marketing activities.

Globalization has led multinational enterprises (MNEs) to expand their products and brands to new and distant markets. Emerging economies offer a large customer base and potential demand for consumer goods, but MNEs face unique challenges due to different business environments and limited resources of local firms. To succeed in these markets, MNEs must develop strategies that consider the diverse customer base, trade-offs between global and local branding, and the positioning of their product portfolio. Market penetration requires entry strategies that provide access to local resources, and MNEs need to go beyond traditional modes of entry like Greenfield projects, acquisitions, and joint ventures (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

The large size and rapid growth of emerging economies have attracted multinational enterprises (MNEs) to enter these markets. Despite challenges such as low incomes and variable customer groups, MNEs see the potential for market expansion and increased profits. This has led to increased efforts by MNEs to establish a presence in emerging economies (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

Emerging economies, despite their attractiveness, often lag behind in terms of economic development and institutional complexity compared to Western Europe and North America. Foreign companies entering these economies face additional challenges and risks, including high volatility due to frequent changes in institutions and industry structure, the need for different ways of interacting with business partners and authorities, context-specific capabilities required for competition, and highly fragmented industries that can rapidly change with the entry of foreign investors, creating uncertainty (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

In emerging economies, foreign investors can successfully serve low-income groups by producing cost-efficient mass products and utilizing people-intensive marketing approaches. The highly segmented market in these economies presents a challenge for multinational enterprises (MNEs) aiming for large market shares. MNEs can choose between global branding, local branding, or multi-tier branding strategies to adapt to the local context and cater to different segments of the market (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

A global brand strategy focuses on the premium segment, which may be small in size but attractive due to the purchasing power of middle-class consumers in emerging economies. This strategy offers advantages such as a consistent brand image worldwide, cost savings from economies of scale, cross-border learning, and the ability to attract talented employees. It requires a recognized global brand, effective communication of brand values, and the ability to maintain quality even in challenging conditions, without necessarily requiring direct investment. Premium brands can be imported and distributed through local agents, particularly when the country of origin contributes to the brand's image and transportation costs are low (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

A local brand strategy is when multinational enterprises (MNEs) focus on serving markets that are different from global markets. By developing a portfolio of local brands, MNEs can build

market share and reduce unit costs through economies of scale and volume sales. This strategy involves adapting products to meet the needs and purchasing power of emerging economies, adjusting product features to local market demands, and potentially developing new products and business models through direct interaction with local communities (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

A multi-tier strategy refers to a business approach where foreign companies combine global and local brands to target different market segments. This strategy is particularly useful in emerging economies with segmented markets. By utilizing both global and local brands, companies can achieve synergies, expand their market reach, and cater to different customer preferences. However, implementing a multi-tier strategy requires possessing the necessary resources, including a global brand, operational capabilities, and the ability to compete with local competitors (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

In order to operate in emerging economies and compete with local brands, multinational enterprises (MNEs) can build capabilities by acquiring resources controlled by local firms. However, the acquisition of local firms is hindered by factors like regulatory constraints and limited availability of suitable targets. To overcome these obstacles, decision makers need to think creatively and customize their entry strategies, exploring alternative modes such as staged, multiple, indirect, and brownfield acquisitions, as well as joint ventures (JVs), to gain control and access to resources in emerging economies (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

When entering a new market, companies seeking to acquire other firms look for targets that have access to important distribution channels and knowledge of the local political and institutional landscape. For firms pursuing a global brand strategy, access to distribution channels that allow them to control product quality is particularly important. On the other hand, companies pursuing local or multi-tier strategies require a broader range of local assets, such as brand names and understanding of local consumer behavior. Cooperation with local firms can also help build political goodwill. However, finding suitable targets with all these resources in a single firm can be challenging. Additionally, obstacles specific to emerging economies, such as poor resource endowments and the need for significant investment in technological upgrading and organizational integration can hinder acquisitions. To overcome these obstacles, foreign investors can choose more or less aggressive entry strategies (Meyer & Thu Tran, 2006).

The telecom industry in Ethiopia remained a state monopoly until the entrance of the Kenyan telecom giant Safaricom. This paper tries to delve in to the Communication Strategy that Safaricom employed to penetrate the Ethiopian Telecom market which has remained a state monopoly since telephone first introduced to the people of the country.

### **2.3. Communication Strategies**

#### **2.3.1. Understanding Communication Strategy**

The significance of communication strategy in market penetration cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in enhancing channel outcomes and expanding market share (Haris, 2022; Mohr, 1990). Particularly in the digital age, online marketing communication channels like interactive advertising, direct marketing, and sales promotion have proven to be exceptionally effective in reaching and engaging with customers (Strauss, 2004). Moreover, achieving market leadership for innovative products and services hinges on effective communication strategies with market players. This involves leveraging push and pull strategies, aggressive branding, and global communication efforts to establish a strong foothold in the market (Viardot, 2011).

#### **2.3.2. The role of communication strategies in market penetration:**

Effective communication plays a crucial role in market penetration, particularly in the context of business relationships and networks (Olkkonen, 2000). In the digital age, the internet and commercial applications have revolutionized communication in the marketplace business, making it easier for businesses to reach and engage with consumers (Yuliana, 2021). Internal communication within organizations also plays a significant role in market orientation and performance, acting as a conduit for the positive effects of market orientation on performance (Danso, 2017). Furthermore, the quality of internal communication can directly impact the relationship between an organization and its clients, ultimately influencing market positioning and customer satisfaction (Stevanović, 2015).

#### **2.3.3. Key aspects of communication strategy in market penetration:**

**Target audience identification:** Understanding the characteristics, needs, preferences, and behaviors of the target audience is essential for crafting effective messages that resonate with them. This helps ensure that promotional efforts reach those most likely to be interested in low-priced offerings (Moss & Warnaby, 1998).

**Message development:** Creating compelling messages that highlight not only competitive pricing but also other unique selling points such as quality attributes or additional benefits is important during market penetration. The message should clearly communicate how choosing this brand will provide better value compared to competitors (Stevanović, 2015).

**Channel selection:** Choosing appropriate channels through which to deliver marketing communications is critical for reaching target customers efficiently and cost-effectively. This may include traditional media (TV/radio/print), digital platforms (websites/social media), direct mailers/email campaigns targeting specific customer segments etc., based on where your target audience can be reached effectively (Moss & Warnaby, 1998).

**Integrated marketing communications (IMC):** Coordinating various elements of promotion like advertising campaigns, sales promotions, direct marketing activities, and public relations ensures consistency across different channels while reinforcing key messaging about affordable offerings throughout all touch points (Moss & Warnaby, 1998). IMC is particularly beneficial for small, consumer-focused, and service-oriented companies, as well as those in manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, and mining industries (Low, 2000).

**Measurement & Evaluation:** Establishing metrics/KPIs allows businesses track effectiveness of their communication strategies during market penetrations initiatives. This enables continuous improvement by identifying what works well ,what doesn't work so well thus making necessary adjustments accordingly By developing an effective communication strategy aligned with pricing strategies during market penetration initiatives companies can create awareness among potential customers about their affordable options build positive perceptions around their brands ultimately driving trial purchase decisions (Moss & Warnaby, 1998).

## **2.4. Regulatory Compliance and Communication**

The telecom industry's regulatory landscape has evolved significantly, with a shift from traditional cost regulation to a mix of structural and price regulation (Antonelli, 1997). As Safaricom considers entering the Ethiopian market, its communication strategies need alignment with local regulations, cultural nuances, and consumer behavior. Adapting approaches to suit Ethiopian norms, such as using local languages, respectful engagement tactics, and compliance with regulations, is crucial.

Safaricom's success hinges on how they navigate challenges, including competition, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory compliance, while effectively communicating with Ethiopian consumers. How they tailor their strategies to match the local landscape will be pivotal in determining their success in Ethiopia's telecommunications sector.

## **2.5. Safaricom's Strategies and Success in Other Markets:**

Safaricom's entry into the Ethiopian telecommunications market requires carefully crafted communication strategies that address local regulations, cultural nuances, and consumer behaviors. Adapting to Ethiopian norms, incorporating indigenous languages, engaging culturally, and adhering to regulatory requirements are crucial for success. Effective management of challenges such as market competition, infrastructure limitations, and regulatory compliance, combined with resonating with Ethiopian consumers, will significantly impact Safaricom's ability to establish a strong presence in the Ethiopian telecom sector. Aligning strategically with the local environment will be essential for successful market penetration and long-term viability.

Beyond Kenya, Safaricom has sought to expand its operations into other African markets. Joint ventures in countries like Tanzania and Uganda, particularly through partnerships with Vodacom, have emphasized customer satisfaction and innovation (Senguo, 2015). The company's flagship mobile money service, M-Pesa, which has achieved significant success in Kenya, serves as a global benchmark for mobile financial services (Hughes, 2007). Safaricom's efforts to replicate M-Pesa's success in markets such as Tanzania provide valuable insights into its strategic approach.

Additionally, Safaricom has engaged in various investments and collaborations across Africa, including technology and innovation hubs that promote entrepreneurship and tech development. These ventures reflect the company's commitment to building trust and working with local institutions (Ashley, 2001). However, international expansion presents challenges such as globalization, industry liberalization, and implementing strategic frameworks like the balanced scorecard. To address these challenges, Safaricom has focused on recruiting innovative talent, differentiating its products, engaging in intensive marketing, forming strategic alliances, and acquiring telecommunications companies (Masiga, 2009).

Market penetration strategies, as outlined by Oloko (2014), involve diverse marketing techniques, including auditory marketing, new product development, and brand partnerships to enhance product uptake and revenue. Mulwa (2013) emphasizes the role of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in the success of M-Pesa, highlighting the importance of a cohesive communication strategy in achieving market success.

## **2.6. Ethiopian Telecommunication Market Overview**

Historically, Ethiopia's telecommunications sector was dominated by Ethio-Telecom, the sole state-controlled operator, with the government's rationale being to ensure universal access and generate revenue (Workneh, 2018). However, recent reforms have deregulated the sector, opening it up to private and foreign investments (Workneh, 2020). This shift aims to introduce new operators and foster competition, potentially transforming the market dynamics.

Ethiopia, with its large and growing population, presents significant untapped potential in telecommunications. The sector's growth prospects are particularly notable in areas such as public health, customer satisfaction, and agricultural information dissemination, as well as the broader ambition of achieving 85% national geographic coverage (Deribe, 2011). With over 100 million people, there is substantial room for expansion in mobile and internet services.

Despite this potential, the Ethiopian telecommunications sector faces challenges such as poor service quality, limited infrastructure, and a lack of competition (Adame, 2021). Although the recent entry of Chinese companies and the deregulation efforts introduce new opportunities, they also bring complexities. The government's move to open the market raises concerns about how

these changes will affect local populations and highlights the need for a balanced approach that addresses both growth and development (Fei, 2020; Workneh, 2020).

The Ethiopian government has undertaken various reforms across sectors like banking (Bezabeh, 2014), public administration (Habtom, 2014), and power (Teferra, 2002) to enhance efficiency and attract private investment. In telecommunications, competition reforms are expected to lower prices and expand user access, aligning with broader economic modernization efforts aimed at improving public welfare (Rodríguez- Castelán, 2021).

## **2.7. Market Penetration Communication Theories**

A range of case studies have explored the role of marketing communication in market penetration strategies. Knight (2022) found that marketing communication is crucial in both advanced and emerging markets, with a focus on the latter. Wahyuni (2017) and Roushan (2015) both highlighted the importance of tailored marketing communication strategies, with Wahyuni specifically focusing on consumer goods and Roushan on mobile marketing in India. Finally, Rosyad (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of various marketing communication strategies in expanding market segments, with a case study on Kompas in West Java. These studies collectively underscore the significance of marketing communication in market penetration, particularly when tailored to the specific market and consumer needs.

Mohr (1990) suggests that a communication strategy should align with channel conditions to enhance outcomes. Wahyuni (2017) applies the SOSTAC (Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control) model to consumer goods marketing, emphasizing the use of promotion mix elements such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, and marketing events. Webster (1968) highlights the complexity of industrial markets and the need for marketing strategies to align with established patterns of influence. Dupelj (1966) underscores the role of the market in the development and expansion of mass communication and culture. These theories collectively emphasize the importance of strategic alignment, understanding market complexity, and leveraging communication methods in market penetration strategies.

Where as in the telecom sector, Faulhaber (2003) challenges the natural monopoly and universal service hypotheses, suggesting that oligopolistic competition is likely to emerge in the broadband

telecommunications market. Pysar (2021) emphasizes the role of marketing in maintaining competitive positions, particularly in the face of competition, and provides recommendations for long-term development and competitiveness. Cazzella (2002) introduces a methodology that combines data mining and economic sciences to analyze market trends, with a focus on the Italian telecommunications market. Welfens (2005) highlights the importance of efficiency and innovation in telecommunications competition, and suggests a dynamic perspective, particularly in oligopolistic markets. Taking this all in to account it is apparent to wonder how Safaricom would be able to penetrate the Ethiopian Telecommunication sector considering the fact that the sector has remained for long under a state monopoly.

### **2.7.1. Critiques of Market Penetration Communication Strategies**

A range of studies have explored the effectiveness of market penetration communication strategies. Bigley (2018) emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach, particularly in the context of multinational enterprises. Wang (2020) compares the trade-offs between expanding market coverage and increasing market penetration, suggesting that the latter may be more effective in certain market environments. Strauss (2004) highlights the unique opportunities offered by the Internet for marketing communication, including interactive advertising and online communities. Chen (2007) delves into the specific strategies used in product launches, finding that informational and relational messages are particularly effective. These studies collectively underscore the importance of a strategic and multifaceted approach to market penetration communication.

### **2.7.2. Future Trends in Market Penetration Communication**

The future of market penetration communication is expected to be significantly influenced by global megatrends such as climate change, recession, demographic shifts, brand proliferation, power shifts in the global economy, and rapid technological development (Rekettye, 2017). This will likely lead to a shift from public to targeted communication (Březinová, 2012), with a focus on the use of advanced technologies such as augmented reality, QR codes, chatbots, the Internet of Things, and image/video 360-degree communication (Dejnaka, 2017). Digital communication research is also expected to play a crucial role, with a focus on understanding and predicting consumer behaviors and market developments (Grewal, 2021).

## **UNIT THREE**

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This particular unit of this thesis introduces the careful selection and use of research methods to get in to the heart of the research finding. As research methodology is a systematic and logical approach to investigating and solving problems (Vickery, 1970; Jagdale, 2019), the researcher follows a clear methodology to identify the kinds of communication strategies that Safaricom employs to penetrate the Ethiopian telecommunication sector and assesses their effectiveness in terms of reaching and engaging the Ethiopian audience there by increasing market share and customer loyalty.

#### **3.2. Research Design**

Understanding research methodologies and designs is imperative for any study, as each method represents a distinct strategy for addressing the research process (Jayatalake, 2020). In qualitative research, designs such as phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative are widely used. Each of these designs has unique qualities and is suitable for specific types of research.

For my study, I chose the case study design to delve deeply into Safaricom's communication strategy as it enters the Ethiopian telecom sector. Given that Safaricom is a new entrant in this market, there is limited existing research on the subject. The case study approach is particularly suitable for this context because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of contemporary phenomena within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

A qualitative case study design facilitates an in-depth understanding of complex issues through detailed, contextual analysis. It employs multiple sources of data, including interviews, observations, and document reviews, enabling triangulation to enhance the validity of the findings. This approach also allows for the exploration of the subjective experiences and perspectives of stakeholders involved, providing a rich, holistic view of Safaricom's communication strategies and their implications for penetrating the Ethiopian telecom market.

By focusing on a single case, I can thoroughly investigate the nuances of Safaricom's strategies and their impact on the Ethiopian telecom landscape. This method not only captures the intricacies of the situation but also provides valuable insights that can inform both academic understanding and practical applications in the field of telecommunications.

### **3.3. Description of Study Company: Safaricom**

Safaricom, a leading telecommunications company in Kenya, is renowned for its innovation in mobile services and its significant impact on the country's communication landscape. Formed in 1997 as a fully owned subsidiary of Telkom Kenya, its primary objective was to offer mobile phone services. Officially established in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Vodafone became a partial shareholder while the Kenyan government retained the majority stake (Park, 2021). The company launched operations in 2000, providing mobile services to Kenyan consumers.

In 2002, Vodafone Group Plc acquired a 40% stake in Safaricom, facilitating the expansion of its services and infrastructure. This partnership brought in expertise and investment crucial for Safaricom's growth. A pivotal moment came in 2007 with the launch of M-Pesa, which revolutionized the mobile money transfer industry. M-Pesa provided a simple and secure way for customers to transfer money using their mobile phones (Hughes, 2007). It transformed financial services in Kenya by enabling users to send and receive money, pay bills, and access other financial services through their mobile devices, becoming a global model for mobile-based financial services.

Throughout the 2010s, Safaricom continued to expand its services, offering a variety of mobile, voice, data, and financial products. The company invested heavily in network infrastructure, enhancing coverage and service quality across Kenya. Innovation remained a key focus, with Safaricom introducing new services and forming partnerships to meet the evolving needs of consumers (Hughes, 2007). Safaricom emerged as the market leader in Kenya, dominating with a substantial customer base. Beyond commercial success, the company made significant contributions to society through various corporate social responsibility initiatives, particularly in healthcare, education, and community development.

In recent years, Safaricom has further expanded its offerings, including advancements in digital services, partnerships in e-commerce, and investments in technology to support its network infrastructure (Mas, 2010). This continuous growth and innovation have solidified Safaricom's position as a transformative force in Kenya's telecommunication industry. Throughout its history, Safaricom has played a pivotal role in transforming communication and financial services in Kenya. M-Pesa, in particular, has been a groundbreaking service, showcasing how mobile technology can significantly impact people's lives, especially in areas with limited access to traditional banking services.

This study aims to explore how Safaricom manages to penetrate the Ethiopian telecom market and the communication strategies it employs to cope with the unique challenges of this new market. The Ethiopian market presents different dynamics and challenges compared to the Kenyan market where Safaricom has been highly successful. By conducting an in-depth case study, this research will provide insights into Safaricom's strategic approach, adaptation mechanisms, and overall performance in the Ethiopian telecom sector.

The case study methodology is particularly suited for this research due to its ability to provide a comprehensive exploration of contemporary phenomena within their real-life context. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of complex issues through detailed, contextual analysis. It employs multiple sources of data, including interviews, observations, and document reviews, enabling triangulation to enhance the validity of the findings. By focusing on a single case, this method captures the intricacies of Safaricom's strategies and their impact on the Ethiopian telecom landscape, offering valuable insights that can inform both academic understanding and practical applications in the field of telecommunications.

### **3.4. Sampling strategy**

A sampling strategy outlines the plan or method used to select participants or cases for inclusion in a research study. In qualitative research, various sampling techniques can be employed based on the study's objectives and nature. Common techniques include non-probability sampling methods such as purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling. Each of these methods serves different research needs and contexts.

For this study on Safaricom's service and communication effectiveness in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, two sampling techniques were deemed appropriate: purposive sampling and random sampling.

Purposive Sampling was utilized to select key individuals involved in Safaricom's communication and commercial strategies. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research objectives. This technique allows researchers to target individuals who possess essential knowledge or experience. In this case, three key individuals from Safaricom's communication and marketing departments were purposefully selected to provide insights into the company's strategic implementation and its impact. The first interviewee was the head of Safaricom's communication department in Ethiopia, offering an understanding of the company's communication strategy. The other two interviewees were personnel responsible for marketing services, providing perspectives on the effectiveness of communication practices.

Random Sampling was employed for selecting customers to participate in the qualitative research. A total of 20 Safaricom customers were randomly chosen from a comprehensive list of 150,000 customers in Bole Sub-City. Random sampling ensures that each customer has an equal chance of being selected, thus minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. This approach allows for a balanced exploration of customer experiences and ensures that the sample is reflective of the broader customer base.

The 20 selected participants were contacted and invited to take part in in-depth interviews, with informed consent obtained prior to participation. This sample size was chosen to achieve a balance between practical constraints and the need for depth in qualitative research, ensuring detailed exploration of key themes and effective data saturation.

### 3.5. Data Gathering Tools

To investigate Safaricom's service and communication effectiveness in Bole Sub-City, Addis Ababa, the following data gathering tools were employed:

#### 1. In-Depth Interviews:

- **Purpose:** To obtain comprehensive and nuanced insights into Safaricom's communication strategies and their impact on both customers and key personnel.
- **Description:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 selected participants, including Safaricom employees and customers. This format allowed for a detailed exploration of relevant topics while maintaining flexibility to address emerging themes.
- **Implementation:**
  - **Interview Guide:** An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to explore key aspects of Safaricom's communication strategies, customer experiences, and overall effectiveness.
  - **Recording and Transcription:** Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for thorough analysis.

#### 2. Document Review:

- **Purpose:** To supplement interview data with formal documentation on Safaricom's communication practices and strategic initiatives.
- **Description:** Relevant documents, including internal communication reports, marketing materials, and strategic plans, were reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of the company's communication framework.
- **Implementation:**
  - **Document Collection:** Documents were collected from Safaricom's communications department and publicly available sources.

- **Analysis:** These documents were analyzed to identify key themes and strategies, providing context and validating findings from interviews.

### **3.6. Reliability and Validity**

To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the research findings on Safaricom's service and communication effectiveness in Bole Sub-City, both reliability and validity were carefully addressed throughout the study.

#### **Reliability:**

##### **1. Consistent Data Collection:**

- A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain consistency across all interviews. This guide included a set of standardized questions to ensure systematic data collection.
- Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim by a trained professional, ensuring accurate and consistent documentation of the responses.

##### **2. Training and Calibration:**

- Interviewers underwent training to follow the interview guide and adopt a neutral stance, minimizing potential interviewer bias. Calibration sessions included practice interviews to standardize the approach.

##### **3. Ongoing Review:**

- Regular reviews of transcripts and field notes were conducted to check for consistency and resolve any discrepancies. Feedback from these reviews informed adjustments to the interview process, enhancing reliability.

#### **Validity:**

##### **1. Content Validity:**

- The interview guide was developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature and the study's objectives. This ensured that the questions addressed all critical aspects of Safaricom's communication strategies and their impact.

##### **2. Triangulation:**

- Multiple data sources were utilized, including in-depth interviews, document reviews, and (optionally) observations. Triangulating these sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and helped validate findings by corroborating evidence from different perspectives.

### 3. **Participant Validation:**

- Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts. This member checking process verified that the data accurately represented their views and ensured the validity of the findings.

### 4. **Reflective Analysis:**

- The research team engaged in reflective analysis to identify and mitigate potential biases or assumptions. This process involved critically examining the research design and data interpretation to uphold objectivity.

By implementing these measures, the study aimed to achieve high reliability and validity, ensuring that the findings on Safaricom’s service and communication effectiveness are both credible and reliable.

## 3.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study on Safaricom’s service and communication effectiveness in Bole Sub-City involved systematic procedures to ensure thorough examination and interpretation of the qualitative data collected.

### 1. **Transcription and Organization:**

- All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of their responses. Transcriptions were reviewed for completeness and accuracy before analysis.

### 2. **Thematic Analysis:**

- **Coding:** Initial coding was conducted to identify and label key concepts and themes within the data. This process involved breaking down the data into manageable segments and assigning codes that represent different aspects of the communication strategies and customer experiences.

- **Theme Identification:** Codes were then grouped into broader themes. This involved examining patterns and relationships between codes to identify recurring themes and significant patterns relevant to the research questions.
  - **Thematic Mapping:** Themes were mapped and organized to reflect the structure of the data. This mapping helped to visualize connections between themes and provided a framework for interpreting the findings.
3. **Triangulation:**
- Data from interviews, document reviews were integrated to provide a comprehensive view of the research topic. Triangulation was used to cross-verify findings from different sources, enhancing the robustness and validity of the results.
4. **Interpretation:**
- The analyzed themes were interpreted in the context of the research objectives and existing literature. This interpretation aimed to provide a deep understanding of Safaricom's communication strategies and their impact on customers, as well as to identify any emerging trends or insights.
5. **Validation and Refinement:**
- Preliminary findings were reviewed and discussed with team members to ensure accuracy and reliability. Member checking was employed where participants reviewed their interview transcripts to confirm that their views were accurately represented.
6. **Reporting:**
- The final analysis was documented, highlighting key themes, patterns, and insights. This included presenting quotes from participants and summarizing how the findings address the research questions and objectives.

By following these steps, the study ensured a rigorous and comprehensive approach to data analysis, providing valuable insights into Safaricom's communication effectiveness and customer experiences.

# UNIT FOUR

## 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

### 4.1. Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and intense market competition, effective communication strategies are crucial for telecommunications companies. This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected to explore Safaricom's communication strategies as it establishes itself in the Ethiopian telecommunications market.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data, gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from Safaricom Ethiopia's Communication Department and employees involved in service delivery, as well as questionnaires distributed to customers, reveals several critical themes:

1. **Strategic Communication Approaches:** This theme explores how Safaricom's communication strategies are designed to penetrate the Ethiopian market and establish a strong brand presence.
2. **Impact on Customer Perception and Sales:** Analysis of customer feedback and sales data to assess how effective Safaricom's communication efforts have been in shaping brand perception and driving sales.
3. **Challenges and Strategic Adjustments:** Examination of the challenges faced by Safaricom in the Ethiopian market and the adjustments made to address these challenges effectively.

This chapter aims to provide a structured and insightful presentation of these themes, offering valuable perspectives on Safaricom's market positioning and contributing to the broader understanding of telecommunications dynamics in Ethiopia.

## **4.2. Interview Data Presentation**

The interview data collected for this research is presented verbatim below. Each response is labeled with the corresponding respondent number to ensure clarity and traceability of the information. The first three respondents are Safaricom personnel, providing insights into the company's communication strategies and operations.

### **Respondent 1**

#### **Question 1: What specific communication channels and platforms does Safaricom employ in its market penetration efforts in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?**

"Safaricom utilizes direct mail campaigns, email marketing, and SMS marketing to engage potential customers in Ethiopia. These channels enable personalized communication and tailored messages, enhancing customer engagement.

We also leverage various digital channels, including social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram, along with online advertising and content marketing. Social media influencers are engaged to produce enticing advertisements, further enhancing customer outreach.

Strategic alliances with local businesses, influencers, and organizations magnify Safaricom's message and broaden its outreach in Ethiopia. One notable instance of this is our collaboration with the Great Ethiopian Run, an esteemed event drawing tens of thousands of participants annually for various long-distance races. Safaricom proudly sponsors the 'Safaricom Women First 5km,' a significant component of the renowned Great Ethiopian Run. This event sees tens of thousands of women taking to the streets of Addis Ababa in a running spectacle tailored for them. Safaricom's prominent sponsorship is reflected in the race's name and the ubiquitous presence of our logo on every participant's t-shirt. This alliance is a testament to our commitment to partnering with major events, such as those pioneered by esteemed Ethiopian athlete Haile Gebrselassie, as we've done for the past three years.

Moreover, we collaborate with micro street businesses through our initiative titled 'Growing Together with Our Community.' We also utilize traditional media channels such as television, radio, print media, and billboards in Addis Ababa. Despite the digital shift, traditional media still

holds significant influence in Ethiopian life, making it a valuable communication channel for reaching a broad audience. We hire media monitoring companies to assess the effectiveness of our ads running in the selected media houses.

Lastly, Safaricom actively participates in community events, sponsors local initiatives, and organizes outreach programs to establish a strong presence on the ground. These initiatives foster trust, gather feedback, and tailor services to meet community needs effectively. Our employees also serve as brand ambassadors, spreading awareness about the company's offerings and values within their networks and communities. Transparent internal communication channels ensure alignment with market penetration strategies and goals."

**Question 2: How effective are Safaricom's communication strategies in reaching and engaging the target audience in Ethiopia?**

"Safaricom continuously conducts market research and analysis to gain insights into the preferences, behaviors, and needs of the Ethiopian audience. This allows the company to tailor its communication strategies accordingly, ensuring that messages resonate with the target audience and are delivered at the right time.

We track key performance indicators (KPIs) such as reach, engagement, conversion rates, and brand sentiment to assess the effectiveness of our communication strategies in Ethiopia. By closely monitoring these metrics across various channels and campaigns, we gain valuable insights into what resonates with the target audience and optimize our approach accordingly.

Feedback mechanisms such as customer surveys, focus groups, and social media monitoring are established to gather input directly from the Ethiopian audience. This enables us to listen to customer concerns, preferences, and suggestions, allowing us to iterate on our communication strategies to better meet their needs and expectations.

Strategic partnerships and collaborations with local businesses, influencers, and organizations play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of our communication strategies. By leveraging their existing networks and credibility, we are able to reach a wider audience and foster deeper engagement within the community.

We understand the dynamic nature of the Ethiopian market and remain flexible and agile in our communication approach. The company is quick to adapt to changing trends, consumer preferences, and market conditions, ensuring that our messages are always relevant, timely, and resonant with the target audience.

Finally, our communication efforts extend beyond just reaching the target audience; we aim to build long-term relationships based on trust, transparency, and value. Through consistent and authentic communication, we seek to establish ourselves as a trusted partner and provider of telecommunications services in Ethiopia, fostering loyalty and advocacy among our customers."

**Question 3: What is the impact of Safaricom's communication strategies on market share and customer loyalty in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?**

"Safaricom's communication strategies have significantly driven market share growth by effectively positioning the brand, promoting its services, and differentiating from competitors. This approach has led to a steady increase in market share.

Targeted communication efforts have successfully attracted new customers and retained existing ones by delivering value and exceptional service, thus building a loyal customer base.

The strategies have shaped Safaricom's brand perception as a trusted and reliable provider, making it the preferred choice in Ethiopia. By differentiating itself from competitors and fulfilling its brand promise, Safaricom has gained a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the communication strategies have enhanced customer engagement and advocacy through personalized marketing and interactive channels, leading to positive word-of-mouth and referrals.

Overall, these strategies contribute to Safaricom's long-term sustainability and growth, positioning the company to maintain its competitive edge and achieve continued success in the Ethiopian market."

**Question 4: What key messages and content does Safaricom use in its communication strategies, and how well do they align with the Ethiopian market?**

"Safaricom emphasizes its commitment to high-quality telecommunications services in Ethiopia, highlighting reliable network infrastructure, fast data speeds, and excellent call quality to reinforce customer satisfaction.

The company showcases its innovative solutions and cutting-edge technology, positioning itself as a leader in digital transformation and technological advancements in telecommunications.

Communication strategies also focus on affordability and value, with messages about competitive pricing, cost-saving bundles, and promotional offers to demonstrate how Safaricom provides the best value for money.

Safaricom highlights its corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, including community impact, environmental sustainability, and development projects, showing its commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen.

The company promotes its customer-centric approach by emphasizing personalized experiences, prompt issue resolution, and exceptional support, showcasing its dedication to customer satisfaction.

Finally, Safaricom communicates its core values, mission, and vision to reinforce brand identity and build an emotional connection with the Ethiopian audience through a commitment to integrity, innovation, and excellence."

**Question 5: What are the challenges and opportunities faced by Safaricom in implementing its communication strategies in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?**

"Safaricom emphasizes the reliability and high quality of its services, which aligns with Ethiopian consumers' expectations for effective communication, business, and entertainment connectivity.

The focus on innovation and technology meets the Ethiopian market's growing demand for advanced telecommunications solutions, catering to desires for enhanced connectivity and efficiency.

Affordability is addressed through competitive pricing and value-added services, making telecommunications more accessible to cost-conscious consumers and appealing to a broader audience.

Safaricom's commitment to community development and social responsibility aligns with Ethiopian societal values, demonstrating corporate involvement in addressing social and environmental issues and building goodwill.

The customer-centric approach, emphasizing personalized service and support, resonates with Ethiopian consumers who value attention to their needs, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

Safaricom's core values and brand identity, built on integrity, innovation, and excellence, align with Ethiopian societal values, fostering trust and affinity towards the brand. Adapting messages to reflect the local socio-cultural context and conducting ongoing market research and feedback analysis are essential for maintaining effective communication strategies."

**Question 6: What are the perceptions and attitudes of Ethiopian consumers towards Safaricom's communication strategies, and how do they impact brand perception?**

"Understanding the demographic composition of Ethiopia helps Safaricom tailor its communication strategies to various segments. Considering factors like age, gender, income, education, and cultural preferences ensures that messages resonate with the diverse population.

Examining consumer behaviors and preferences allows Safaricom to align its messaging with the needs and expectations of Ethiopian consumers. This includes understanding mobile usage patterns and service expectations to deliver relevant content.

Analyzing the competitive landscape enables Safaricom to identify gaps and differentiate itself. By evaluating competitors' strategies and positioning, Safaricom can refine its approach to stand out in the market.

Cultural sensitivity is crucial for effective communication. By respecting Ethiopian cultural contexts and values, Safaricom enhances its brand perception and strengthens connections with consumers.

The use of local languages and appropriate communication channels, such as social media and traditional media, maximizes message reach and impact. Effective communication in these channels helps engage Ethiopian consumers.

Implementing feedback mechanisms allows Safaricom to gather direct insights from consumers, assess the effectiveness of its messaging, and make necessary adjustments to improve brand perception."

**Question 6: What are the perceptions and attitudes of Ethiopian consumers towards Safaricom's communication strategies, and how do they impact brand perception?**

“From our perspective, Safaricom has indeed encountered several challenges in Ethiopia. Security issues, particularly during times of conflict, have limited our ability to execute communication plans effectively, especially in rural areas. Internet shutdowns have further complicated our efforts to reach a wider audience.

Regulatory constraints have also been a significant hurdle. Navigating local telecommunications regulations, including restrictions on advertising content and complex licensing requirements, has proven to be both intricate and time-consuming.

Ethiopia’s diverse cultural and linguistic landscape necessitates that we adapt our communication strategies to resonate with various ethnic groups and language preferences. This involves tailoring our messaging and branding to align with local cultural norms while maintaining consistency across different regions.

In a competitive market with both local and international telecommunications providers, we face the challenge of differentiating our communication strategies. To effectively capture market share, we must highlight our unique value propositions and address the competitive landscape in our messaging.

Infrastructure limitations, particularly in rural areas, impact the consistency of our communication experiences. We are actively working to address gaps in network coverage, internet accessibility, and power supply to enhance the effectiveness of our communication strategies.

Finally, socio-economic factors such as income disparity, literacy rates, and access to technology influence the reach and effectiveness of our communication efforts. It is crucial for us to address disparities in digital literacy, affordability, and access to telecommunications services to effectively engage all segments of the population.”

**Question 7: How do Safaricom's market penetration communication strategies in Ethiopia contribute to the broader understanding of market penetration in the telecommunications industry?**

“Ethiopia offers substantial growth opportunities for Safaricom, driven by its large population, emerging middle class, and rising demand for telecommunications services. Our expansion into this market not only opens new revenue streams but also allows us to diversify our business operations.

Our status as one of the early entrants into the Ethiopian telecommunications sector provides a strategic edge. This early market entry enables us to establish a strong presence, capture market share ahead of competitors, shape consumer preferences, build brand loyalty, and influence industry dynamics.

Strategic partnerships with local businesses, government agencies, and community organizations have been pivotal in enhancing our communication reach and effectiveness. By collaborating with these trusted entities, we can leverage existing networks, gain valuable market insights, and access new customer segments.

Ethiopia's ongoing digital transformation—encompassing infrastructure development, e-commerce expansion, and digital literacy programs—presents significant opportunities for innovation. By aligning with these initiatives, we can introduce new digital services that meet evolving consumer needs and preferences effectively.

Our strong brand reputation, marked by reliability, innovation, and customer-centricity, offers a competitive advantage in the Ethiopian market. Emphasizing our unique value propositions, service offerings, and brand attributes helps differentiate Safaricom and attract customers in a competitive landscape.”

**Question 8: What are the perceptions and attitudes of Ethiopian consumers towards Safaricom's communication strategies?**

“Ethiopian consumers place a high value on reliability and quality in telecommunications services. When Safaricom effectively communicates its commitment to these aspects, it is likely to be perceived as a trusted provider, which fosters positive attitudes towards the brand.

For consumers who prioritize innovation and technology, Safaricom’s communication efforts that highlight advanced services and cutting-edge solutions are particularly influential. Clear communication of our technological advancements helps in positively shaping perceptions of our capabilities.

Emphasizing affordability and value propositions in our communication strategies resonates with cost-conscious consumers. Those seeking cost-effective options may view Safaricom more favorably compared to competitors, which enhances positive brand attitudes.

Community engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) also play a significant role. Consumers who prioritize social impact respond positively to Safaricom’s efforts to contribute to societal welfare. Showcasing these contributions can strengthen perceptions of our commitment to community development and foster positive brand attitudes.

On the flip side, perceived cultural insensitivity in our communication strategies can lead to negative attitudes. If our messages fail to respect local customs or traditions, it may result in skepticism or distrust among Ethiopian consumers.

Additionally, if our communication strategies are seen as overly promotional or sales-driven, it might be viewed negatively. Messaging that lacks sincerity or authenticity can come across as opportunistic, potentially leading to negative perceptions.

Lastly, inconsistencies between our communication strategies and actual customer experiences can also result in negative attitudes. Failure to effectively address consumer concerns may lead to dissatisfaction and harm Safaricom's reputation among Ethiopian consumers."

**Question 9: Can you examine how brand perception impacts Safaricom's brand perception within the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?**

"Consistency and coherence in Safaricom's communication are crucial for reinforcing its brand identity and messaging. When consumers encounter messaging that aligns with Safaricom's values and promises across various channels, it strengthens their perception of the brand as reliable and trustworthy. Effective communication also plays a key role in differentiating Safaricom from competitors by highlighting its unique value proposition. By articulating the brand's distinctive features and benefits, Safaricom fosters perceptions of itself as innovative and desirable compared to alternative providers.

Moreover, communication strategies that evoke emotions or address consumer needs help build a deeper connection with the Safaricom brand. Positive emotional experiences lead to favorable perceptions, increased loyalty, and advocacy among consumers. Reputation management is another critical aspect where transparent and honest communication enhances Safaricom's image as a reputable and dependable corporate entity.

Additionally, highlighting Safaricom's community engagement and social impact efforts contributes to a positive brand perception. Support for local communities positions Safaricom as a socially responsible brand deserving of support and loyalty. Lastly, integrating mechanisms for collecting feedback and addressing concerns promptly within communication strategies demonstrates customer-centricity. This responsiveness positively impacts brand perception, showing that Safaricom values and effectively addresses consumer input."

**Question 10: How does Safaricom's market penetration communication strategies in Ethiopia contribute to the broader understanding of market penetration in the telecommunications industry?**

"Safaricom's entry into the Ethiopian market illustrates the complexities and opportunities inherent in cross-border expansion. By examining Safaricom's approach, stakeholders gain

valuable insights into the challenges and best practices for market penetration in diverse regions. The company's experience navigating regulatory constraints in Ethiopia highlights important regulatory considerations and policy implications. This understanding helps inform policymakers and investors about the risks and opportunities associated with local regulations.

Safaricom's communication strategies underscore the significance of cultural adaptation and localization in successful market penetration. Analyzing these efforts provides a deeper understanding of how to effectively address cultural sensitivities when entering new markets. Additionally, Safaricom's competitive dynamics and industry positioning strategies offer insights into how differentiation and value propositions can help gain market share and sustain a competitive advantage.

The company's customer acquisition and retention strategies provide practical insights into building brand loyalty and driving growth. Furthermore, Safaricom's presence in Ethiopia has broader socio-economic implications, impacting job creation, infrastructure development, and digital inclusion. Understanding these effects sheds light on the role of telecommunications in driving economic growth and social progress. Overall, Safaricom's market penetration communication strategies in Ethiopia offer a comprehensive perspective on effective approaches for entering new markets and achieving sustainable growth in the telecommunications industry.”

**Question 11: What are your additional insights into Safaricom's communication strategies aimed at penetrating the Ethiopian telecom market?**

“Safaricom's communication strategies could benefit significantly from employing customer segmentation and targeting. By identifying and categorizing distinct customer groups based on demographic, psychographic, and behavioral traits, Safaricom can tailor its messaging, offers, and communication channels to address the specific needs and preferences of each segment. This personalized approach is likely to enhance engagement and effectiveness, ultimately driving market penetration and growth in Ethiopia.

Another potential strategy is leveraging influencer marketing campaigns. Partnering with influential individuals, celebrities, or thought leaders in Ethiopia could help Safaricom extend its reach and impact. By utilizing the credibility and existing audience networks of these

influencers, Safaricom can increase brand awareness and trust among Ethiopian consumers, facilitating market penetration and enhancing brand growth.

Employee advocacy programs also offer a powerful means of communication. By engaging employees as brand ambassadors, Safaricom can leverage their personal and professional networks to promote the company's values and offerings. This strategy not only extends the company's reach and credibility but also fosters internal alignment and enthusiasm, translating into more authentic and impactful external communication.

Adopting an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) approach can further enhance Safaricom's communication strategy. By coordinating advertising, public relations, digital marketing, and sales promotions into a unified strategy, Safaricom can ensure consistency and synergy across all communication channels. This integrated approach amplifies brand messaging, reinforces key value propositions, and maximizes engagement and conversion opportunities.

Lastly, preparedness for crisis communication is crucial. Safaricom should develop robust crisis communication plans, protocols, and training to respond effectively to adverse events. Demonstrating accountability, empathy, and swift resolution during crises will help preserve trust and reputation, mitigating potential negative impacts on market penetration and brand equity in Ethiopia.”

## **Respondent 2**

### **Question 1: How would you go about comparing the growth in Safaricom's customer base from its inception to the present?**

“Reflecting on Safaricom's journey since its inception, it's remarkable to see how our customer base has evolved. When we first launched our services nearly two years ago, we were starting from scratch - no customers to speak of. Our initial mission was clear: raise awareness about Safaricom and what we had to offer. Fast forward to the present, and our focus has shifted. Now, we're dedicated to not only attracting new customers but also retaining our loyal base. Our efforts to provide top-notch internet services have paid off, with the number of customers exceeding even our most optimistic projections.”

### **Question 2: What factors do you believe have contributed to the growth of your customer base?**

“What sets Safaricom apart and drives our customer growth is our commitment to excellence. As an alternative internet provider, we've carved out a niche for ourselves, offering services of unparalleled quality. Customers recognize and appreciate this, often citing it as a key reason for choosing Safaricom. Additionally, our customer-centric approach, characterized by friendly and attentive service delivery, resonates strongly with our target audience, further fueling our growth.”

### **Question 3: How effective were Safaricom's communication efforts in terms of boosting sales?**

“Our communication efforts have been pivotal in elevating Safaricom's brand presence and driving sales. Traditional channels like TV and radio ads have been instrumental, particularly in capturing the attention of older demographics. However, it's our strategic presence on social media platforms like LinkedIn that has truly made a difference. In today's digital age, where everyone is glued to their phones, social media serves as a powerful tool for engaging with customers. Younger individuals, in particular, are heavily influenced by our social media content, shaping their perceptions and driving them towards our services.”

**Question 4: Which channels do you believe hold the most influence?**

While TV and radio advertisements undoubtedly hold sway, especially among older segments of the population, it's fascinating to observe the differing impacts of various channels. Interestingly, platforms like TikTok, popular among younger demographics, aren't frequently cited by older customers as a source of discovering Safaricom. Conversely, social media emerges as a dominant force in reaching and resonating with the younger crowd, showcasing the importance of diversifying our communication channels to cater to varied audience preferences.

**Question 5: Do you track referral sources to determine how each customer initially learned about your services?**

“Our approach to tracking referral sources is rooted in respect for our customers' autonomy. We prioritize creating an open and comfortable environment where customers feel empowered to share their experiences organically. While we don't employ formal tracking forms, our customer feedback mechanisms provide valuable insights into how customers first learned about Safaricom. Whether it's through social media, mainstream media ads, or other sources, understanding these referral pathways helps us refine our communication strategies and better meet customer needs.”

**Question 6: So, do you not utilize any form to track referral sources?**

“No, we have our own customer feedback mechanisms in our system.”

**Question 7: Which services do your customers tend to prefer the most?**

“Among our suite of offerings, our data service stands out as a clear favorite among customers. The demand for reliable and high-quality internet services is ever-growing, and Safaricom's commitment to delivering excellence in this realm has cemented our position as a preferred provider. Customers consistently praise the reliability and performance of our data service, reinforcing our reputation for excellence in this domain.”

**Question 8: How many mobile subscribers do you currently have?**

“While exact figures may elude us at this moment, the trajectory of Safaricom's growth in mobile subscribers over the past couple of years is undeniable. We've not only met but surpassed our

targets, a testament to the effectiveness of our strategies and the strength of our offerings. Safaricom continues to attract and retain a diverse customer base, positioning us for continued success in the dynamic telecommunications landscape.

In the respondent's perspective, Safaricom's journey is characterized by a relentless pursuit of excellence, leveraging effective communication strategies, and a deep understanding of customer preferences to drive growth and innovation.”

## **Respondent 3**

### **Question 1: How would you go about comparing the growth in Safaricom's customer base from its inception to the present?**

“Safaricom's growth trajectory is depicted as a journey from high expectations, rooted in its international status, to the realization that it began as a startup. Despite initial challenges, the company has evolved into a provider of diverse services, leading to exponential growth in its customer base. The narrative underscores how customers' interactions with Safaricom have transformed over time, from merely purchasing SIM cards to actively engaging with a range of services, indicating the company's maturation and adaptability in meeting evolving consumer needs.”

### **Question 2: What factors do you believe have contributed to the growth of your customer base?**

“The respondent identifies several key drivers behind the expansion of Safaricom's customer base. Central to this is the fostering of a strong relationship between the company and its employees, characterized by a sense of ownership and commitment to collective progress. Additionally, strategic advertising efforts and adept utilization of media platforms, particularly social media, emerge as crucial factors in attracting and retaining customers. The introduction of new products further enriches the customer experience, underscoring Safaricom's proactive approach to innovation and market differentiation.”

### **Question 3: How effective were Safaricom's communication efforts in terms of boosting sales?**

“While the respondent does not explicitly assess the impact of Safaricom's communication efforts on sales, the emphasis on effective advertising and media utilization suggests their significant role in informing and influencing consumer behavior. Social media channels are singled out as potent tools for disseminating information and driving customer engagement, indicative of Safaricom's adaptability to digital communication trends and its ability to leverage them for commercial success.”

**Question 4: Which services do your customers tend to prefer the most?**

“Insights into customer preferences shed light on Safaricom's competitive strengths and market positioning. The exceptional speed of internet services, the quality of devices offered, and the reliability of voice communications are highlighted as key factors driving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, the respondent's observation of curiosity among customers towards Safaricom's diverse service portfolio underscores the company's success in catering to varied consumer interests and expanding its market reach.”

**Question 5: How effective was street vending for you when you first started?**

“The respondent's reflection on the effectiveness of street vending elucidates Safaricom's grassroots approach to customer acquisition in its formative years. By directly engaging with potential customers on the streets, Safaricom was able to raise awareness about its services and differentiate itself from competitors, laying the groundwork for its subsequent growth and market dominance. While the reliance on street vending has diminished over time, its continued presence underscores Safaricom's commitment to personalized customer outreach and community engagement, albeit in a more targeted and strategic manner.”

## Customer Interview Data Presentation

“The following table summarizes the key findings from the customer interviews with Safaricom users. This data provides insights into the demographic characteristics, service usage patterns, communication effectiveness, overall satisfaction, and areas for improvement as perceived by the customers.

**Table: Summary of Data from Safaricom Customers**

Aspect	Details
Demographic Overview	70% men, 30% women, Age groups: 25-34 (50%), 35-44 (25%), 80% employed, 20% self-employed
Customer Profile	60% have been Safaricom customers for less than 6 months, Most used services: mobile voice calls (85%), mobile data/internet (75%), SMS (55%), M-PESA (15%)
Effectiveness of Communication	45% found it effective, 20% found it somewhat effective, 25% were neutral, 10% found it very effective
Overall Satisfaction	70% satisfied, 25% neutral, 5% very satisfied
Likelihood of Recommendation	50% probably yes, 25% definitely yes, 20% were not sure, 5% probably not
Insights	High percentage of recent customers suggests successful new user attraction, TV and social media play significant roles, Room for improvement in communication effectiveness
Suggestions for Improvement	Boost network coverage, Prioritize faster internet access, Leverage digital platforms, Tailor communication to local cultures, Offer competitive pricing, Target older demographics, Use localized radio ads, Increase awareness for M-PESA services, Ensure consistent communication

Additional Feedback	Positive feedback on fast internet, Focus on competitiveness, Localize marketing messages, Emphasize value and affordability, Enhance corporate social responsibility
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**4.3. Data Analysis**

In the pursuit of understanding Safaricom's impact and effectiveness within the Ethiopian telecommunications market, a comprehensive thematic analysis has been conducted on qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews and customer feedback. This analysis aims to illuminate the nuanced ways in which Safaricom’s communication strategies influence customer perceptions, service satisfaction, and overall market performance.

By meticulously examining the responses from key company respondents and a representative sample of 20 customers, this study provides a detailed overview of the thematic patterns that emerge from Safaricom’s efforts to navigate and succeed in a competitive market. The following thematic analysis explores the effectiveness of Safaricom’s communication strategies, the growth and retention of its customer base, the alignment of key messages with market needs, and the challenges and opportunities faced by the company. This analysis serves to highlight the strengths and areas for improvement in Safaricom's approach, offering valuable insights for enhancing communication strategies and optimizing customer engagement.

Thematic Analysis of Safaricom's Communication Strategies and Customer Perceptions

**1. Effectiveness of Communication Strategies**

Safaricom’s communication strategies have played a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and driving business growth. According to the interviews, Safaricom’s approach to communication has evolved significantly since its inception. Reflecting on Safaricom’s journey, one respondent noted, “Our initial mission was clear: raise awareness about Safaricom and what we had to offer,” and highlighted the shift to focusing on both attracting new customers and retaining the existing base. The company’s strategic use of TV and radio ads, alongside a robust presence on social media, has been instrumental. One respondent emphasized, “Social media

serves as a powerful tool for engaging with customers,” indicating the effectiveness of digital channels in reaching younger demographics.

## **2. Customer Growth and Retention**

Safaricom has demonstrated notable success in growing its customer base and enhancing customer retention. The analysis of customer data shows that a significant portion of respondents (60%) have been Safaricom customers for less than six months, reflecting recent adoption. One respondent attributed this growth to Safaricom’s commitment to excellence and a customer-centric approach, stating, “Customers recognize and appreciate the unparalleled quality of our services.” Additionally, the analysis reveals that mobile voice calls and data services are the most commonly used, reinforcing the importance of maintaining high service standards to sustain customer loyalty.

## **3. Impact of Communication on Market Share and Loyalty**

The impact of Safaricom’s communication strategies on market share and customer loyalty is evident. The interviews highlighted Safaricom’s success in differentiating itself from competitors, with one respondent noting, “Safaricom’s commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction has established it as the preferred choice among consumers.” The data indicates that while 70% of respondents are satisfied with Safaricom’s services, there is room for improvement. The analysis suggests that Safaricom’s effective communication has contributed to an increasing market share and a loyal customer base, with a significant percentage of respondents expressing willingness to recommend Safaricom to others.

## **4. Alignment of Key Messages with Market Needs**

Safaricom’s key messages and content align well with the Ethiopian market’s needs and preferences. The company emphasizes quality of service, innovation, affordability, community impact, and a customer-centric approach. Respondents highlighted Safaricom’s focus on “delivering high-quality telecommunications services” and “showcasing innovative solutions.” The analysis underscores the importance of culturally sensitive messaging and competitive offers to enhance brand perception and address local needs effectively. Suggestions from customers to

tailor communication to local languages and cultural contexts further support the need for localized messaging.

## **5. Challenges and Opportunities**

Safaricom faces several challenges and opportunities in its communication strategies. Challenges include expanding network coverage, especially in rural areas, and enhancing internet speed. One respondent suggested, “Focus on expanding network coverage to ensure better connectivity,” reflecting a common concern among customers. Opportunities lie in leveraging digital platforms, improving cultural sensitivity, and enhancing competitive offers. The data reveals a need for continuous investment in digital innovation and customer engagement, with suggestions for increased use of mobile apps and online customer portals. Addressing these challenges and seizing opportunities will be crucial for Safaricom’s continued success in the Ethiopian market.

### **4.4. Result and Discussion**

The data gathered from interviews with Safaricom respondents, coupled with feedback from 20 customer questionnaires, provides a comprehensive overview of Safaricom's communication strategies and their impact on customer engagement and growth. This analysis highlights the strengths, challenges, and opportunities identified through thematic analysis, offering valuable insights for refining Safaricom’s approach in the Ethiopian telecom market.

Safaricom’s communication efforts have been pivotal in shaping its brand identity and customer relationships. Traditional media channels such as TV and radio have been instrumental in building brand awareness, particularly among older demographics. One respondent highlighted the importance of these channels, stating, “TV and radio ads have been key in reaching our older customers and reinforcing our brand presence.” However, the rise of digital platforms has introduced new dynamics. Social media, in particular, has proven to be a powerful tool in engaging with younger audiences. The same respondent noted, “Our presence on social media has allowed us to connect more effectively with younger consumers who are highly active online.” This indicates that Safaricom’s multi-channel approach is effective but requires ongoing adaptation to technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors.

Despite the positive reception, there is room for improvement. While 45% of respondents rated Safaricom's communication as effective, 25% remained neutral. This neutral stance suggests that while the communication strategies are meeting expectations for some, others perceive a need for more impactful and consistent messaging. As one respondent pointed out, "There is a noticeable gap in how effectively we communicate our value propositions to different customer segments." This indicates the necessity for more targeted and refined messaging strategies to enhance overall effectiveness.

The growth trajectory of Safaricom's customer base reflects a successful acquisition strategy. A significant 60% of customers have joined Safaricom within the past six months, demonstrating the company's effective outreach and marketing efforts. One respondent attributed this growth to Safaricom's focus on high-quality service delivery, stating, "Our dedication to providing exceptional internet services has clearly resonated with new customers." However, maintaining this growth will require ongoing efforts to retain existing customers and attract new ones amidst increasing competition.

Safaricom's communication strategy aligns well with the Ethiopian market's expectations, particularly in terms of quality, innovation, and affordability. Customers appreciate the company's emphasis on delivering high-speed internet and offering competitive pricing. One customer commented, "Safaricom's focus on affordable, high-speed internet services is a major draw." Despite these strengths, there is a call for more culturally sensitive and localized messaging. The need for communication that resonates with Ethiopian cultural contexts and preferences is evident, as one respondent suggested, "Tailoring our messages to reflect local cultures and languages can enhance our connection with the community."

Several key challenges and opportunities have emerged from the analysis. Expanding network coverage, especially in rural areas, remains a significant challenge. Customers have voiced the need for improved connectivity beyond urban centers. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms such as mobile apps and online customer portals could enhance communication and engagement. The opportunity to provide more competitive pricing and attractive offers compared to competitors like Ethio Telecom also presents a potential avenue for growth. Offering innovative packages and promotions could further boost customer acquisition and retention.

Safaricom's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another notable aspect. The company's efforts in community development and social initiatives are well-regarded, and continuing to emphasize these efforts can strengthen brand reputation and customer loyalty. One respondent emphasized, "Our CSR initiatives play a crucial role in building goodwill and fostering a positive image in the community."

#### **4.5. Content Analysis**

This content analysis examines Safaricom's strategic documents, internal reports, marketing materials, and publicly available information. The analysis is structured around five key themes: Communication Strategies Overview, Cultural Adoption, Customer Engagement, Market Positioning, and Effectiveness of Campaigning. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Safaricom's operations and strategic priorities in the Ethiopian telecommunications market.

##### **1. Communication Strategies Overview**

Safaricom Ethiopia's communication strategies encompass a multifaceted approach aimed at achieving market penetration and customer engagement in the Ethiopian telecommunications market. The company leverages a variety of advertising and promotional channels, including television, radio, print, and digital platforms, to reach a broad audience. Campaign messages are crafted to highlight unique selling propositions (USPs), emphasizing Safaricom's reliability, innovation, and customer-centric services. The frequency and reach of these advertisements are meticulously planned to ensure consistent brand visibility and message retention among the target population. Additionally, the alignment of brand messaging with local cultural values plays a crucial role in resonating with Ethiopian customers, fostering a sense of relevance and connection to the Safaricom brand.

Customer engagement is another cornerstone of Safaricom's communication strategy. The company maintains an active presence on social media platforms, regularly sharing content and interacting with customers to build a community around the brand. Customer feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and direct messages, are integral to this strategy, allowing Safaricom to gather valuable insights and respond to customer needs promptly. Public relations efforts, including press releases, public statements, and participation in local events, further

enhance Safaricom’s visibility and reputation. These initiatives not only promote the brand but also demonstrate Safaricom’s commitment to community involvement and social responsibility, which are important factors for building trust and loyalty among customers.

Moreover, Safaricom’s communication strategies extend to effective customer service and sales communication. The company employs various channels, such as call centers, email, and chatbots, to provide efficient customer support, ensuring that inquiries and issues are addressed promptly. Informational content, including FAQs and user guides, is designed to be clear and helpful, enhancing the overall customer experience. Direct marketing efforts, such as SMS campaigns and promotional offers, are strategically used to drive sales and customer retention. In retail locations, communication through sales representatives is tailored to provide personalized service and build strong customer relationships. Internally, Safaricom focuses on aligning employees with the company’s goals through clear and consistent communication, supported by training and development programs. The company’s digital presence, including its website and mobile app, is optimized for user experience, providing accessible information and engaging features that support customer interaction and satisfaction.

### **Messaging and Branding**

Safaricom Ethiopia’s promotional materials strategically employ hashtags and slogans designed to resonate with their target customers by using both English and Amharic. Key hashtags include **#1Wedefit**, **#FurtherAheadTogether**, and **#DigitalMusicChallenge**. These hashtags are central to their recent marketing campaign, which involves a talent competition for aspiring singers. The campaign features prominent Ethiopian singers in promotional videos to attract young, talented participants. Across all their owned and shared media platforms, Safaricom consistently posts at least three updates daily to promote the competition, thereby reinforcing their brand presence. Their popular Amharic slogan, “በአንድነት ወደፊት” (Together Forward), is prominently featured in all promotional materials and communications.

Language plays a critical role in Safaricom’s messaging strategy. They effectively use both Amharic and English to craft their messages and produce promotional videos and visual content. This bilingual approach helps them connect with a broad audience. However, there is room for improvement in diversifying their language use to include other Ethiopian languages, which

would enable them to reach a wider and more diverse customer base. Expanding their linguistic range in promotional materials would enhance their ability to communicate effectively with all existing and potential customers across Ethiopia.

By leveraging hashtags, bilingual slogans, and frequent social media updates, Safaricom is building a strong, culturally resonant brand. Their use of well-known Ethiopian singers in promotional content not only engages the local audience but also adds credibility and appeal to their campaigns. However, to maximize their reach and effectiveness, they need to incorporate more Ethiopian languages into their communications. This broader linguistic inclusivity would help Safaricom to better connect with Ethiopia's diverse population, strengthening their market presence and customer loyalty.

The "**Terek Begursha**" competition by Safaricom Ethiopia exemplifies an innovative approach to messaging and brand content, aimed at deepening customer engagement and enhancing brand loyalty. This competition, where one million customers are awarded, highlights Safaricom's commitment to rewarding its user base, thereby fostering a positive brand image. The promotional campaign for "Terek Begursha" utilizes a blend of traditional and digital media, with a strong presence on social media platforms. By incorporating culturally resonant themes and leveraging popular Ethiopian influencers, the campaign effectively captures the attention of a diverse audience. The messaging underscores Safaricom's dedication to customer appreciation and community involvement, reinforcing the brand's reputation as a customer-centric and socially responsible entity. This strategic initiative not only boosts customer satisfaction but also strengthens the emotional connection between Safaricom and its users, positioning the brand as a leading and trusted telecommunications provider in Ethiopia.

## **Media Channels**

Safaricom effectively utilizes mainstream media and social media platforms to reach its customers. A recent promotional video titled "Smart Way to Pay," which aired across various mainstream media outlets and Safaricom's own and shared social media channels, exemplifies this strategy. The 1:20-minute video features young and adult social media influencers, aiming to attract customers to use their M-Pesa service. The video starts with a famous TikToker known for his unique dance moves, followed by a young girl promoting traditional attire she makes, and

a mother-daughter duo streaming their cooking on TikTok. All characters run out of airtime, leading to the introduction of the M-Pesa mobile money app as a simple solution for buying airtime. The video also includes adults using the mobile app for various tasks, targeting customers of all age groups.

Safaricom's social media presence spans TikTok, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, and Instagram, where it regularly posts communication messages and promotional content. On TikTok, Safaricom has 17.4K followers, which, while modest given the platform's potential for rapid follower growth, shows considerable engagement. Their Facebook page is more vibrant, with over 116K followers, making it the primary platform for disseminating messages. The YouTube channel, with over 15K subscribers, reflects the company's extensive video production efforts but indicates room for growth given Safaricom's size. The Telegram channel has over 59K followers, showing slightly better performance compared to other platforms.

While Safaricom is aggressively campaigning and utilizing mainstream media and social media influencers to spread its messages, its communication efforts on its own social media channels require further enhancement. Increasing engagement and follower counts across all platforms would improve their overall digital presence and effectiveness. Strengthening their social media strategy by producing more engaging content and actively interacting with followers could help Safaricom better leverage these channels to achieve their communication goals.

## **2. Cultural Adoption**

**Localization Efforts:** In the early stages of its market entry, Safaricom Ethiopia's messaging and promotional materials were predominantly in English, alongside the country's official working language, Amharic. However, over time, Safaricom has increasingly tailored its communications to better resonate with the local population by incorporating more Amharic and other local languages such as Oromifaa. This strategic linguistic shift reflects an understanding of the importance of cultural relevance in effective communication and market penetration.

Safaricom's promotional materials also exhibit a blend of traditional and modern elements, reflecting Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage and contemporary influences. By featuring traditional and modern costumes in their visuals and promotional videos, Safaricom successfully appeals to

a broad demographic, including young people, adults, and the elderly. This visual diversity not only enhances the relatability of their campaigns but also demonstrates respect for and celebration of Ethiopian culture.

In my analysis of Safaricom's messages and promotional materials, there is a clear effort to align with Ethiopian cultural traditions, customs, and norms. Rather than presenting content that contradicts or challenges local values, Safaricom's materials amplify the positive aspects of Ethiopian culture, language, and tradition. This approach not only helps to build trust and acceptance among Ethiopian consumers but also strengthens Safaricom's brand identity as a company that values and respects the local culture. By continuously adapting its cultural strategy, Safaricom effectively enhances its engagement with the Ethiopian market, fostering a strong and positive brand presence.

### **3. Customer Engagement**

As highlighted in previous sections, Safaricom Ethiopia's primary strategy for customer engagement revolves around organizing competitions and offering enticing reward packages. These initiatives are designed to capture the attention and participation of a wide customer base by providing tangible incentives. For instance, Safaricom's "Terek Begursha" competition, which awards one million customers, exemplifies how the company leverages rewards to foster engagement and build brand loyalty.

In addition to these promotional competitions, Safaricom actively collaborates with prominent event organizers, such as the Ethiopian Great Run. By sponsoring major events and even naming one of them "Safaricom Women First 5000," Safaricom enhances its visibility and strengthens its connection with the community. These sponsorships not only increase brand recognition but also position Safaricom as a key supporter of local events and social causes. Such strategic partnerships help Safaricom to reinforce its commitment to community involvement and further engage with customers on a personal level, thereby solidifying its reputation as a socially responsible and customer-focused brand.

Furthermore, Safaricom employs social media platforms for direct customer interaction, using these channels to address inquiries, gather feedback, and engage in real-time communication.

The company's efforts in integrating customer feedback into its service improvements and addressing issues through dedicated customer service channels highlight a commitment to responsive and personalized engagement. While these activities are designed to enhance customer relations and brand loyalty, their effectiveness in building long-term engagement and addressing diverse customer needs is contingent upon consistent and meaningful implementation

#### **4. Market Positioning**

In the Ethiopian telecommunications market, Safaricom faces competition primarily from Ethio Telecom, the country's state-owned telecom provider. Safaricom's communication strategies are distinctively designed to differentiate it from Ethio Telecom. While Ethio Telecom's communication often focuses on broad, government-backed initiatives and national coverage, Safaricom employs a more nuanced approach. This includes leveraging high-profile sponsorships, culturally tailored promotional campaigns, and extensive use of local languages, which are less prevalent in Ethio Telecom's strategies. Safaricom's integration of both traditional and digital media channels, combined with its innovative use of local influencers and community-based initiatives, contrasts with Ethio Telecom's more traditional and centralized communication efforts.

Safaricom differentiates itself from Ethio Telecom through its emphasis on cultural relevance and innovative customer engagement strategies. The company's use of local languages, culturally resonant themes, and community-focused initiatives helps create a strong emotional connection with Ethiopian consumers. For instance, Safaricom's sponsorship of major events, like the Ethiopian Great Run, and its culturally adapted marketing campaigns, such as competitions and reward-based promotions, set it apart from Ethio Telecom's more generic and government-driven communication. This localized and customer-centric approach not only enhances Safaricom's brand appeal but also establishes it as a dynamic and responsive alternative in Ethiopia's telecommunications market.

## **5. Effectiveness of Campaigning**

Safaricom Ethiopia has utilized a range of marketing strategies since its entry into the Ethiopian market to enhance its brand presence and engage customers. To assess the effectiveness of these strategies, I focused on the "Terek Begursha" promotion. Initially slated to conclude on July 4, 2023, the campaign has been extended to August 3, 2023, which, while demonstrating the promotion's success in generating engagement, also indicates that the original goals may not have been fully met within the initial timeframe. Extensions in campaign durations are often employed to address unforeseen challenges or to maximize impact, suggesting that the original objectives were not completely achieved as planned.

The campaign has effectively created excitement among both existing and potential customers, as evidenced by the substantial participation and the diverse range of prizes awarded, including cars, motorbikes, and high-end electronics. This approach successfully incentivizes engagement and increases brand visibility. However, the decision to extend the promotion reflects the need to capture additional opportunities and address any shortfalls in reaching the intended audience within the original schedule.

The ongoing extension and continued prize offerings highlight the campaign's substantial impact but also suggest that Safaricom sought to address gaps in the initial campaign reach and effectiveness. While the extended promotion aims to further drive customer interaction and product usage, it also underscores the challenges faced in achieving the planned outcomes within the original timeframe. Overall, while the "Terek Begursha" promotion demonstrates effective engagement strategies, the extension indicates a need for adjustments to fully meet its original objectives.

# UNIT FIVE

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 5.1. Conclusion:

1. In the dynamic landscape of Ethiopia's telecommunications industry, effective communication strategies are pivotal for Safaricom's growth and success.
2. This comprehensive analysis unveils key insights and recommendations tailored to elevate Safaricom's brand presence, customer engagement, and market penetration in Ethiopia.
3. From consistent messaging to influencer partnerships, from employee advocacy to crisis preparedness, each recommendation serves as a strategic cornerstone for Safaricom's journey towards sustained excellence in Ethiopia's telecom market.

The data gleaned from in-depth interviews and questionnaire analysis provides a robust foundation for understanding Safaricom's current communication landscape and its impact on customer acquisition, satisfaction, and recommendations. Through a breakdown of key findings and insights, the researcher uncovers valuable perspectives on Safaricom's strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for innovation within the Ethiopian market.

4. Moreover, Safaricom's journey in Ethiopia reflects a narrative of strategic evolution, underscored by effective communication strategies, customer-centric initiatives, and a commitment to digital transformation.
5. By embracing these insights and implementing the recommendations delineated, Safaricom can navigate the complexities of Ethiopia's telecom industry with agility, resilience, and a steadfast dedication to delivering unparalleled value to its customers.

In essence, this roadmap serves as a compass, guiding Safaricom towards a future defined by sustainable growth, innovation, and positive societal impact in Ethiopia's telecommunications landscape. Through network expansion, digital innovation, cultural sensitivity, competitive offers, targeted marketing, customer education, and corporate social responsibility, Safaricom can solidify its position as one of the leaders in the Ethiopian telecom market, driving growth, innovation, and positive social change in the region.

## **5.2. RECOMMENDATION**

In the dynamic landscape of Ethiopia's telecommunications industry, effective communication strategies are pivotal for Safaricom's growth and success. As Safaricom endeavors to establish a formidable presence in Ethiopia, it must navigate the complexities of the market with precision and foresight. This comprehensive analysis unveils key insights and recommendations tailored to elevate Safaricom's brand presence, customer engagement, and market penetration in Ethiopia.

By focusing on four strategic pillars – consistent messaging, influencer partnerships, employee advocacy, and crisis preparedness – Safaricom can fortify its communication strategies and position itself for sustained excellence in Ethiopia's telecom market. Each recommendation serves as a strategic cornerstone, guiding Safaricom towards enhanced visibility, credibility, and resonance among Ethiopian consumers. Through a proactive and cohesive approach to communication, Safaricom can solidify its foothold in Ethiopia and emerge as a leading telecommunications provider in the region.

### **1. Implement Consistent Messaging:**

In order to reinforce Safaricom's brand identity and values, it's crucial to maintain consistency across all communication channels. This entails ensuring that the messaging remains uniform in advertising, social media, customer service interactions, and corporate communications. By aligning all communication efforts, Safaricom can strengthen its brand recognition and differentiation in the Ethiopian telecom market.

### **2. Strengthen Influencer Partnerships:**

To expand its reach and enhance brand credibility, Safaricom should prioritize building strong partnerships with influential individuals in Ethiopia. Collaborating with local celebrities, thought leaders, and social media influencers can help Safaricom tap into their existing audience networks and gain endorsement among target consumers. By leveraging the influence and advocacy of key opinion leaders, Safaricom can significantly increase brand awareness and consideration among Ethiopian consumers, facilitating market penetration and growth.

### 3. Foster Employee Advocacy:

Engaging employees as brand advocates can be a powerful strategy for Safaricom to amplify its communication efforts in Ethiopia. By empowering and incentivizing staff to promote Safaricom's offerings and values within their personal and professional networks, Safaricom can extend its reach, credibility, and influence in the market. Employee advocacy programs not only foster internal alignment and pride but also translate into authentic and impactful external communication that resonates with Ethiopian consumers, driving market penetration and brand affinity.

### 4. Enhance Crisis Preparedness:

Safaricom should prioritize the development of comprehensive crisis communication plans and protocols to effectively manage communication crises in the Ethiopian market. This involves establishing clear procedures, training employees, and implementing mechanisms for swift and transparent communication in times of adversity. By demonstrating accountability, empathy, and resolution during crises, Safaricom can preserve trust, reputation, and consumer confidence in Ethiopia, mitigating potential negative impacts on market penetration and brand equity.

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## **Appendices**

### **Interview Questions for Safaricom Communication Department**

1. What specific communication channels and platforms does Safaricom employ in its market penetration efforts in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?
2. How effective are Safaricom's communication strategies in reaching and engaging the target audience in Ethiopia?
3. What is the impact of Safaricom's communication strategies on market share and customer loyalty in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?
4. What key messages and content does Safaricom use in its communication strategies, and how well do they align with the Ethiopian market?
5. What are the challenges and opportunities faced by Safaricom in implementing its communication strategies in the Ethiopian telecommunication industry?
6. What are the perceptions and attitudes of Ethiopian consumers towards Safaricom's communication strategies, and how do they impact brand perception?
7. How do Safaricom's market penetration communication strategies in Ethiopia contribute to the broader understanding of market penetration in the telecommunication industry?
8. What other additional information can you provide about Safaricom's communication strategies to penetrate the Ethiopian telecom market?

### **Interview Questions for Safaricom Sales Personnel**

1. How effective were Safaricom's communication efforts in terms of boosting sales?
2. How would you go about comparing the growth in Safaricom's customer base from its inception to the present?
3. How effective was street vending for you when you first started?
4. Which channels do you believe hold the most influence?
5. Do you track referral sources to determine how each customer initially learned about your services?

6. Which services do your customers tend to prefer the most?
7. What factors do you believe have contributed to the growth of your customer base?
8. How many mobile subscribers do you currently have?

### **Questionnaire for Customers**

This questionnaire is strictly for academic research purposes under the Department of Journalism and Communication /PR and Strategic Communication/ at Addis Ababa University.

Your Participation Requested in Exclusive Research Interview on Market Penetration Communication Strategy in the Telecommunication Industry: How Safaricom is doing in Ethiopia. Your Inputs Valued for Strictly Research Purposes.

#### Section 1: Demographic Information

Gender:

1. Male
2. Female

Age:

- A. Under 18
- B. 18-24
- C. 25-34
- D. 35-44
- E. 45-54
- F. 55-64
- H. 65 and over

Occupation:

- A. Employed
- B. Self-employed
- C. Student
- D. Retired
- E. Other

Section 2: Safaricom usage. How long have you been a Safaricom customer?

- A. Less than 6 months
- B. 6 months to 1 year
- C. 1-2 years
- D. 2-5 years

Which Safaricom services do you currently use? (Check all that apply)

- A. Mobile voice calls
- B. SMS/Messaging
- C. Mobile data/internet
- D. M-PESA (mobile money transfer)
- E. International calling
- F. Roaming services
- G. Other (please specify)

Section 3: Communication Channels 7. How do you usually learn about new Safaricom services or promotions? (Check all that apply)

- A. TV advertisements

B. Radio advertisements

C. Social media

D. SMS notifications

E. Email newsletters

F. Word of mouth

G. Other (please specify)

On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective do you find Safaricom's communication about its services and promotions?

A: Not effective at all

B: Somewhat effective

C: Neutral

D: Effective

E: Very effective

Section 4: Satisfaction and Loyalty. How satisfied are you with the overall service provided by Safaricom?

A. Very satisfied

B. Satisfied

C. Neutral

D. Dissatisfied

E. Very dissatisfied

Would you recommend Safaricom to friends or family members?

A. Definitely yes

B. Probably yes

C. Not sure

D. Probably not

E. Definitely not

Section 5: Suggestions and Feedback.

What improvements would you suggest to Safaricom regarding its communication strategy in Ethiopia?

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Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with Safaricom?

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Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is valuable for our research.