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The Role of Mental Imagery in Building Customer Relationships

دور الصورة الذهنية في بناء العلاقة مع الزبون

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Abstract :

The study aimed to identify the role and importance of mental image at Mobilis, and to analyze the correlation between mental image dimensions and customer relationship building indicators. We used a descriptive analytical approach. The study population consisted of Mobilis customers, from which a sample of 47 customers was taken. Statistical processing was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study concluded that there is a strong and positive correlation between all dimensions of mental image and customer relationship building indicators.

Keywords : mental image, relationship building, loyalty, customer, Mobilis.

الملخص:

هدفت الدراسة على التعرف على مدى دور وأهمية الصورة الذهنية في مؤسسة موبيليس، وتحليل مدى الارتباطية بين أبعاد الصورة الذهنية ومؤشرات بناء العلاقة مع الزبون، حيث استخدمنا المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتمثل مجتمع الدراسة في زبائن مؤسسة موبيليس وتم أخذ عينة منه تقدر47 زبون، وتمت المعالجة الإحصائية باستعمال برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (Spss)،

وخلصت الدراسة على وجود علاقة بين جميع أبعاد الصورة الذهنية ومؤشرات بناء العلاقة مع الزبون وهي علاقة قوية وطردية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صورة ذهنية، بناء العلاقة، ولاء، زبون، مؤسسة موبيليس.

1.Introduction :

Customers form a mental image of every organization, and this image is a key factor in the organization's success and continuity in the market. The more positive the mental image, the greater its impact on supporting the organization's competitive advantage, as it is one of the most important intangible elements. It also contributes to retaining existing customers, gaining their trust and satisfaction, and strengthening the relationship with them, which encourages them to speak positively about the institution to others, thereby helping to attract new customers.

The customer is the cornerstone of the organization's success, continuity, and prosperity, as most marketing activities are directed toward meeting their needs and desires, considering them the beating heart of the organization. These activities aim to achieve customer satisfaction, improve their loyalty, and influence their purchasing behavior.

Based on this, this study sought to determine the role of mental image in building customer relationships by focusing on various aspects and variables related to mental image and customers, which raises the following question :

To what extent does the mental image of the telecommunications company Mobilis influence customer relationship building ?

The following questions can be asked :

• To what extent does the telecommunications company Mobilis embrace the concept of mental image ?

• Are Mobilis customers loyal ?
• Does the company's embrace of the concept of mental image achieve customer loyalty ?

1.1 Study hypotheses :

• Mobilis has taken great care to build and consolidate its mental image.
• Customers are loyal to Mobilis.
•The company's adoption of the concept of mental image achieves customer loyalty.

1.2 Importance of the study :

• The importance of the mental image of a service company and its impact on customers in terms of retaining them, attracting new customers, and strengthening relationships with them.
•Understanding the mental image that customers have of Mobilis' services.
• Identifying knowledge related to mental image and customers.
•Identifying the relationship between mental image and customers.
•Enriching the researcher's knowledge from a scientific perspective.

1.3 Study objectives :

•To understand the concept of mental image, its meanings and implications, and how it is formed.
•To understand the extent to which mental image affects customers.
•To underscore the importance of building a positive mental image in developing the performance of service organizations.
•To demonstrate the role of mental image in strengthening customer relationships.

1.4 Methodology and tools used:

Our study relied on a descriptive analytical approach, which allowed us to provide a comprehensive and accurate description

of the subject from a theoretical perspective, referring to various references from books, articles, and scientific papers that addressed the subject of the study.

As for the tools used, in the practical chapter, we used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data, which was directed at the study sample, then coded and downloaded using the SPSS statistical package program, and the results were analyzed and interpreted.

2.Theoretical literature

2.1 First : What is mental image ?

Many researchers have studied the mental image of an institution as a result of the increasing interest of service institutions in their image among their customers and their continuous efforts to improve it as a key factor in gaining customer trust and achieving their satisfaction and loyalty.

2.1.1 Definition of the mental image of a service institution

There are many definitions and studies related to mental images. The term “mental image” originates from the Latin word “IMAGE,” which is related to the verb “IMTTARI,” meaning “to imitate” or “represent.” However, while the linguistic meaning of mental image refers to imitation or representation, its physical meaning is “reflection,” which is the meaning referred to in Webster's Dictionary: a common mental conception among members of a particular group about a particular person or thing" (HEBERT, 1998, p. 7) .

A mental image is also defined as "the actual image that forms in people's minds about various establishments and institutions. This image may be formed from direct or indirect experience, and may be rational or irrational. It may be based on evidence and documentation or on rumors and unreliable statements, but ultimately it represents a reality that is true for those who hold it in their minds . (Ajwa & Kariman, 2005, p. 12)

definition 1: “A mental image is defined as a mental evocation of the perception of something or an event that can remain across time and space, to be revived as a result of a signal” (RATIER, Nov 2002)

Definition 2 : "A set of subjective impressions that form in people's minds. These impressions can be ideas about values, or about the personality of an individual or institution, and many of these impressions are formed through what is confirmed by the mass media (SIQUER, 1998, p. 2)

Definition 3: “The image of an institution is the image that is formed in the minds of the public through various activities, demonstrations, and events” (PHILIPPE, Fev2000, p. 125)

From the above definitions, we can derive a comprehensive definition of mental image : The mental image represents customers' perceptions and impressions of a company's products, which are reflected positively or negatively on the company's relationship with its customers.

2.1.2 Characteristics of mental image : A mental image has several characteristics, the most important of which are as follows :

-The image is personal and subjective : A mental image is based on exaggerated generalization. Therefore, individuals automatically assume that every member of the group to which the image applies is like the group as a whole, despite individual differences and variations. However, the process of perception and recall is a personal one ; each person perceives things differently from others, and each person recalls things differently from others.

A mental image is nothing more than perception, storage, and then recall when a stimulus occurs (LENDREVIE & D , 2000, p. 35)

- The image is selective and simplistic: This characteristic responds to the first objective, which is to search for information that the customer encounters. The customer draws on the information that he or she deems appropriate and leaves the rest. It can also be noted that this process of recall is time-limited, as information that exceeds the limits of perception remains only for a short time before quickly fading away (LENDREVIE & D, 2000, p. 774).

- **The image is relatively stable :** The mental image tends to be stable and resistant to change, as the stability factor works in the institution's favor when the image is good in the minds of customers, as it is the foundation on which the relationship of familiarity and loyalty to the brand is built, and it is also considered a competitive advantage. Competition cannot easily and quickly break a good image. On the other hand, the stability factor is a curse on the brand and the service institution, as the process of reevaluating the image requires a long time and a great deal of effort and expense (LENDREVIE & D , 2000, p. 774)

-Mental evocation: These are mental impressions of everything related to the service institution, whether these impressions are about certain elements representing the institution's image (the institution itself, the brand image, the service image) or about the elements of the service institution with all its components and dimensions (Ajwa & Kariman, 2005, p. 129)

2.1.3 Dimensions of mental image

Most researchers agree that the mental image comprises three basic components, which are as follows (Al-Harith, 2000)

- Cognitive dimension: This dimension refers to the knowledge through which an individual perceives a subject, issue, or institution. This information is considered the basis on which the mental image that an individual forms about others and

institutions is built. Based on the accuracy of the information and knowledge we obtain about these institutions, the accuracy of the mental image we form about them is determined. According to the cognitive dimension, errors in the mental image are mainly due to the incorrect information and knowledge that these individuals have obtained.

- Emotional dimension: The emotional dimension refers to a positive or negative inclination toward a subject, issue, person, or institution within the framework of the mental images that individuals form. The emotional aspect is formed along with the cognitive aspect, and over time, the information that individuals form about various issues, institutions, and subjects fades, and the emotional dimension falls between positive and negative.

- Behavioral dimension: An individual's behavior reflects the nature of their mental image of institutions. The importance of mental images lies in their ability to predict individual behavior. It is also reflected in certain direct behaviors such as bias or intolerance towards the service institution or brand, as customer behavior is nothing more than a manifestation of their mental image of the institution in reality.

2.2 The nature of customer relationship management

It can be said that customer relationship management, in terms of content, accompanied the beginnings of commercial exchange, where the seller was required to convince the buyer of his products. In terms of form and conceptual terminology, it is relatively modern, as its emergence was linked to the increase in the productive capacities of institutions and the rise in the level of customer interest.

2.2.1 Definition of customer relationship management : Customer relationship management is defined as : “An approach that allows companies to identify, acquire, and retain customers and earn their loyalty in order to increase turnover and profits.

In other words, it involves building long-term, comfortable relationships with the best customers by exploiting points of contact with them" (Lefébure & Venturi, 2001, p. 31)

It has also been defined as : "Management that encompasses the activities of an organization and the technologies that support it in order to understand its customers from different angles, with the aim of differentiating the organization's products and services competitively. Customer relationship management requires continuous effort to improve customer knowledge and how to acquire and retain them. This management aims to increase customer satisfaction and maximize customer loyalty to the organization and the value of their purchases... all within the context of fierce competition in the face of globalization, high customer turnover, and the increasing costs of winning new customers" (Amrittiwana, 2001, p. 21)

Or it is : "A strategy for creating value for the customer and the organization by instilling a customer-oriented culture and developing operational strategies that allow this orientation to be embodied, based on knowledge of the customer, their needs and expectations, in order to satisfy them, win their loyalty, and thus create value for the customer and achieve the profitability set by the organization (Supizet, 2002, p. 420)

2.2.2 Customer relationship management objectives

There are a number of objectives that any organization seeks to achieve through customer relationship management, namely:

- Customer satisfaction.
- Customer loyalty.
- Customer value.

- **The concept of customer satisfaction**

First, it is necessary to distinguish between customer satisfaction and job satisfaction. The former relates to external customers, while job satisfaction is closely related to internal

customers, i.e., individuals working within the organization. There are several methods that can be used to achieve job satisfaction for employees. Customer satisfaction has been defined as the degree to which the customer perceives the organization to be effective in providing products thaeet their needs and desires.

- **The concept of customer loyalty**

The concept of loyalty encompasses a variety of ideas, all of which accept the idea that loyalty is the process of retaining customers for as long as possible. Interest in customer loyalty stems from its benefits and direct impact on a company's profitability. Previous studies have shown that the cost of acquiring a new customer is five times the cost of retaining an existing customer (Atef, 2011, p. 93)

- **Customer Value**

The development of environmental concepts has become an urgent necessity, and all marketing activities have begun to change accordingly. Marketing has shifted toward building relationships with external customers so that organizations can achieve a certain value for customers.

There are a number of definitions of customer value, including (the difference between total customer value and total cost).

It is also defined as what the customer gets as a result of the exchange for the price they pay, representing the total benefit minus the costs incurred by the customer when making the purchase decision.

2.2.3 The role of customer relationship management in the organization:

• Achieving customer loyalty.

• Identifying customers who generate the highest returns for the organization.

• Getting to know customers better.
• Acquiring new customers.
• Providing personalized services to individual customers.
• Increasing the return per customer.
• Accelerate order fulfillment.

2.3 The role of the mental image of the institution in influencing the customer

The mental image of the institution plays a pivotal role in influencing the customer, as it contributes to shaping their attitudes and perceptions towards the institution and its services. The more positive the mental image, the more it is reflected in the customer's perception and trust in the institution, leading to positive attitudes towards its services and products. The mental image also directly influences the customer's responses and behavior, and may prompt them to make a purchase decision and continue to deal with the institution. Therefore, mental images are closely linked to the final attitudes and behaviors that customers adopt towards the institution and its products, making them a key factor in influencing their behavior and building a sustainable relationship with them.

According to Ratier, the image comes into play at the following stages of the purchase process (Muhammad, 2005-2006, p. 82)

The need recognition stage : This is the stage that expresses dissatisfaction associated with a problem related to the purchasing decision. Once the need is recognized, the consumer will start searching for information.

- **Information search stage :** The search for information takes two forms, internal and external, and in both cases, image plays an important role in helping to process the large amount of information and bring to mind what is important.

- **Alternative evaluation stage :** The importance of image becomes particularly apparent at this stage, as it becomes a criterion for preference for a service or brand by reminding the customer of the advantages associated with the alternatives.
- **Purchase stage :** The image of the institution or salespeople greatly influences the decision to purchase from that store. For example, if the institution uses modern and technological means, this reflects speed and accuracy in service delivery. As for salespeople, their ability to communicate with and understand customers reflects the quality of service delivery, as they are the face of the institution.
- **Purchase outcome evaluation stage (post-purchase behavior) :** After making a purchase decision, the customer faces one of two situations : either satisfaction and contentment, or dissatisfaction. Based on this feeling, the decision to purchase again in the future is made. At that point, the image is recalled and used as information to help the customer in their subsequent purchasing choices.

3.Applied study :

Selection of the study population and sample: The study population and sample were selected in accordance with the study we conducted, as follows :

3.1 Study population : The study was limited to customers of the Mobilis branch in Tamanrasset.

3.2 Study sample and size : We relied on a sample of Mobilis customers by distributing a questionnaire to customers, taking into account the diversity of the sample in terms of gender (male and female). The sample size was 100 customers, to whom the questionnaire was distributed. The number of questionnaires

returned and valid for analysis was 47, as shown in the following figure :

Table 1: Distribution of the study sample.

Study Sample	Number	Percentage
Number of distributed questionnaires	100	100**%**
Number of non-retrieved and damaged questionnaires	53	60%
Number of questionnaires included in the study	47	40%

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

3.3 Reliability of the Study instrument :

Reliability refers to the extent to which the study instrument is capable of producing the same results when applied under the same conditions. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is considered one of the most important measures of internal consistency reliability. Its value ranges between 0 and 1, where values closer to 1 indicate high reliability, while values closer to 0 indicate low reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha was calculated using the statistical software SPSS, and the following table illustrates the results.

Table 02 : Results of Cronbach's Alpha

AXES	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient
Mental Image of Mobilis Company	13	0.788
Customer Relationship	12	0.800
Total	25	0.873

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

We note from the table that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.873, based on 25 questions containing agreement scores, meaning that 87.3% of Mobilis customers agree. This reflects a high and very acceptable level of stability for the tool used in the study, lending greater credibility to the results.

3.4 Presentation and discussion of study results

In this section, we will discuss the results of the study variables, which include all personal variables, mental image variables, and customer relationship variables, along with a discussion of the results obtained.

3.5 Characteristics of the study sample and its results

We will discuss the analysis of personal variables by using frequencies and percentages to learn more about each of the personal variables.

- **Distribution of the sample by gender**

Table 3: Distribution of sample individuals by gender variable.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	9	19.1
Female	38	80.9
Total	47	100.0

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

The table shows that males account for 19% of the sample, while females account for 81%. These percentages are quite far apart, indicating that Mobilis has a slight difference between males and females, as the institution's customers come from all segments of society.

•Distribution of the sample by age group

The sample was distributed by age into groups summarized in the following table :

Table 4 : Distribution of the sample by age group

Age	Frequency	Percentege
From 18 to 28 years	39	83.0%
From 19 to 29 years	8	17.0%
Total	47	100.0%

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

3.6 Sample distribution According to Subsricption

Table 5 : Sample Distribution According to Subscription Years

Subscription years	Frequency	Percentege
Less than 1 year	6	12.8%
From	7	14.9%
From	12	25.5%
More than	22	46.8%
Total	47	100.0%

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

We note from the table and figure above that most customers have been subscribing for more than 6 years, at a rate of 46.8%, This indicates that the institution has retained its customers for more than 6 years, which is a good indicator of the institution's good relationship with its customers and their loyalty to Mobily, reflecting this group's loyalty to the institution. The second percentage, 25.5%, represents the group with less than 6 years of subscription. The third percentage, 14.9%, represents the group ranging from 1 to 3 years, which reflects the company's success in retaining its customers, which is good for the company's image. The fourth group represents those who have been customers for less than one year, estimated at 12.8%.

3.7 Analysis of the study axes

The Likert scale was used to determine the general trend of customer opinions on the questionnaire items as a whole and on each axis of the questionnaire, as mentioned previously in Table 6.

- **Analysis of the independent variable questions Mental image**

Table 6: Sample individuals' opinions on the mental image dimension

Number	Arithmetic Means	Standard Deviations	Rank
C 1	2.43	0.927	8
C 2	2.40	0.851	10
C 3	2.43	0.994	9
C 4	2.79	1.082	1
C 5	2.51	0.953	7
C 6	2.62	1.134	5
C 7	1.60	0.648	13
C 8	2.64	1.072	4
C 9	1.68	0.783	12
C 10	2.79	0.977	2
C 11	2.57	1.118	6
C 12	2.21	0.954	11
C 13	2.72	1.036	3

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.
From this table, we derive the following table :

Table 7 : sum of Arithmetic Means and Standar Deviations

Dimension	Arithmetic Means	Standar Deviations	Trend
Mental Image of	**2.4141**	**0.51665**	**Agree**

Mobilis Company			

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

Mental image : The questionnaire results show that the arithmetic mean was 2.41 with a standard deviation of 0.51. The fourth and tenth items ranked first with an arithmetic mean of 2.79, indicating that customers feel a sense of belonging to Mobilis and that the company responds to all customer requests. Paragraph 13 ranked second with a mean of 2.72 and a standard deviation of 1.03, meaning that when customers hear the name Mobilis, they remember the positive aspects of the services provided. while paragraph 7 ranked last among the paragraphs with a mean of 1.60 and a standard deviation of 0.64. This means that the agency is not sufficiently widespread in the country.

- **Analysis of questions related to the dependent variable, customer relationship**

Table 8 : Analysis of paragraphs related to the customer relationship variable

Number	Arithmetic Means	Standard Deviations	Rank
C 14	1.94	0.895	12
C 15	2.47	1.213	7
C 16	2.57	1.078	5
C 17	2.40	1.014	9
C 18	2.34	0.815	11
C 19	2.83	1.090	1
C 20	2.66	1.089	4
C 21	2.72	1.136	3
C 22	2.45	1.059	8
C 23	2.51	1.214	6
C 24	2.40	1.155	10

C 25	2.83	1.222	2

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

From Table 8, we derive the following table :

Table 9: Sum of Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations

Dimension	**Arithmetic Means**	**Standar Deviations**	**Trend**
Customer Relationship	2.5106	0.60857	Agree

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

A study of the customer relationship paragraphs shows that their average is 2.51 with a standard deviation of 0.60. Paragraphs 19 and 25 ranked first, with paragraph 19 having an average of 2.83 and a standard deviation of 1.09. while paragraph 25 had an average of 2.83 with a standard deviation of 1.22. This means that customers trust Mobilis and always say positive things about the company, while paragraph 14 ranked last with an average of 1.94 and a standard deviation of 0.89, meaning that the company's services are not used frequently. It also appears that the arithmetic means of the paragraphs on customer relations are average.

- **Results of hypothesis testing**
- **First hypothesis :** Mobilis paid close attention to building and consolidating its image.

From this, the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H0 : Mobilis did not pay attention to building and consolidating its image.

H1 : Mobilis pays attention to building and consolidating its mental image.

This hypothesis was selected using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

Table 12: Shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the mental image variable.

Dimension	Arithmetic Means	Standar Deviations	Trend
Customer Relationship	2.4141	0.51665	Agree

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

From Table 12, we find that Mobilis pays great attention to building and consolidating its mental image. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis H0 and accept the alternative hypothesis H1.

- **Second hypothesis :** Customers are loyal to Mobilis.

Through this, the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H0 : Customers are not loyal to Mobilis.

H1: Customers are loyal to Mobilis.

This hypothesis was chosen using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

Table 13 : Shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the customer relationship variable.

Dimension	Arithmetic Means	Standar Deviations	Trend
Customer Relationship	2.5106	0.60857	Agree

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

From Table 13 : we find that there is customer loyalty to Mobilis, and therefore we accept the alternative hypothesis H1 and reject the null hypothesis H0. In other words, there is customer loyalty to Mobilis.

- **Third hypothesis :** The company's adoption of the concept of mental image achieves customer loyalty.

To test this hypothesis, we divided it into sub-hypotheses and calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient as follows:

H0 : Mobilis' adoption of the concept of mental image does not achieve customer loyalty.

H1 : Mobilis' adoption of the mental image concept achieves customer loyalty.

Table 14: Results of Pearson Correlation Test for the Dimension of Mental Image and Customer Loyalty

Statement	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Coefficient of Deteon (r^2)	Regression Coefficient	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Effect of the first dimension on the second dimension	0.662	0.438	0.662	1 45 46	0.000

Source : Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

In order to test the validity of this hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to study the relationship between mental image and customer loyalty at Mobilis. The table above shows that there is a high correlation coefficient between mental image and customer loyalty, with a correlation coefficient of 0.662 and a significance level of less than 0.05, equal to 0.000.

3.8 Testing the hypotheses :

Through our theoretical study, we proved the validity of the following hypotheses :

- ✓ First hypothesis : Mobilis has taken great care to build and consolidate its mental image. The study proved that

the first hypothesis is true, as the main goal of any institution is to consolidate a good mental image among its customers.

- ✓ Second Hypothesis : Customers are loyal to Mobilis. The study proved that the second hypothesis is true. According to the study, we found that customers are loyal to Mobilis and that there is a direct relationship between mental image and customer loyalty.
- ✓ Third hypothesis : The company's adoption of the concept of mental image achieves customer loyalty. The study proved, through the interpretation of the results in light of the third hypothesis, that the latter is true. The more the company adopts a good mental image, the greater the customer loyalty it achieves.

4. CONCLUSION :

The goal of every institution is to achieve success and ensure survival and continuity in the market. To achieve this, it seeks to retain its current customers and build long-term relationships with them. Creating a positive image in the customer's mind is one of the most important means that the institution relies on in this context, as it plays an effective role in enhancing trust and improving the customer's perception of the institution and its services.

The study concluded with a set of findings :

- ✓ The results of the statistical analysis showed that Mobilis pays great attention to building and consolidating its mental image.
- ✓ The results of the statistical analysis showed that there is loyalty on the part of Mobilis customers.
- ✓ The results of the statistical analysis showed that Mobilis' adoption of the concept of mental image achieves customer loyalty.

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