

Leveraging e-CRM to Enhance Customer Experience and Drive Loyalty in Algeria's Telecom Sector: A Case study of Mobilis Telecom

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationships among e-CRM, Customer Experience and Customer Loyalty in the context of Telecommunication sector in Algeria. The study employed regression analysis for sample data derived from 119 Mobilis Telecom Company customers since it helps to establish the impact of e-CRM on both Customer Experience and Customer Loyalty as well as the association between Customer Experience and Customer Loyalty. The results provide significant and positive effect of e-CRM on both customer experience and customer loyalty. In addition, customer experience deepens customer loyalty, thus underlining why it is important to deliver great customer experience to generate lasting customer loyalty.

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1. Introduction

It is an acknowledged reality that the telecommunication sector was among the initial sectors wherein CRM was extensively employed by all hierarchical levels regardless of the specifics of their service related work, along with it had to improve the customer connect through direct marketing, sales and customer enhancement programs. The transformation has resulted in electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM), which is a more sophisticated method that uses digital tools for providing more productive customer interactions, faster and better service delivery, and personalized experiences. Because of the growing use of e-CRM systems by telecommunication companies, it is essential to understand how e-CRM effect on customer experience and loyalty is crucial. e-CRM involves using sophisticated analytic tools with multi-channel communication platforms to deliver superior services in a quick, effective, and personalized way, which results in boosting customer loyalty (Rahimi and Kozak, 2017). Personalization systems are all about using customer data to customize offers and communications. This not only boosts satisfaction and loyalty but also helps increase the likelihood that customers will continue to use the same service provider (Alavi and Aghakhani, 2019). Furthermore, e-CRM tools facilitate the customer service process by enabling the representatives to access all the information of a customer at one go so that they can resolve customer problems faster and in a more effective manner (Awasthi and Sangle, 2013). While it offers numerous advantages, the process in itself has several complications associated with it, such as data privacy and security issues, integration and association with the older existing systems, and high costs of implementation. According to Chen and Popovich (2003), a strong data security system and complete elimination of customer resistance to change are the basic success factors for implementing e-CRM in the telecommunication sector. By focusing on these aspects, companies can optimize their e-CRM strategies and create a seamless and efficient customer experience.

Furthermore, the digital infrastructure in Algeria has started developing, and more customers have begun to acquire mobile and internet services (Malki et al., 2023). This indicates how effectively e-CRM systems will be used in managing the customers' relationships in a digital environment (Boukary and Bensalah, 2018). Additionally, the research gap regarding the implementation and usefulness of e-CRM practices within the Algerian telecommunication sector is quite large. The filling up of this gap will detail on theoretical and practical insights for the betterment of both these sectors (Abdelkader and Hussein, 2016). Last, this will help telecom operators in understanding the challenges and formulating proper strategies to overcome such challenges in implementing e-CRM, such as data privacy concerns, legacy integration, and customer resistance to the digital channel against better customer experience and loyalty enhancement, thereby positively benefiting the overall competitiveness of the Algerian telecommunication sector.

Therefore, this article investigates the role of e-CRM in enhancing customer experience and achieving customer loyalty, providing a comprehensive overview of e-CRM strategic importance in maintaining competitive advantage in the telecommunication industry.

2. Literature Review

E-CRM leverages internet solutions with traditional CRM activities to improve customers' experience by providing a platform for contact with customers. e-CRM has been identified in the telecom sector as an important factor in better customer treatment and to foster customer loyalty, particularly in emerging markets like Algeria.

A number of studies have pointed out the advantages of e-CRM for the telecom sector, stressing its contribution to the quality of service and customer loyalty. For example, Poushter (2018) claims that e-CRM systems help telecom companies customize customer interactions, make service delivery more seamless, and more quickly address customer inquiries, significantly enhancing customer experience. The possibility to be more personalized leads to increased satisfaction from customers, as they feel more respected by and understood by their service providers.

Moreover, e-CRM helps in building customer loyalty. A study conducted by Alshurideh et al. (2019) proved a direct positive relationship between effective e-CRM practices and higher levels of customer loyalty in the telecom industry. The study went ahead to demonstrate how telecom companies that apply strong e-CRM strategies will better learn about the needs and preferences of their customers and, in turn, provide services and promotions that are specifically suited for them. This approach to service not only satisfies the customer but also builds a great emotional attachment between them and the service provider, resulting in a high degree of customer loyalty.

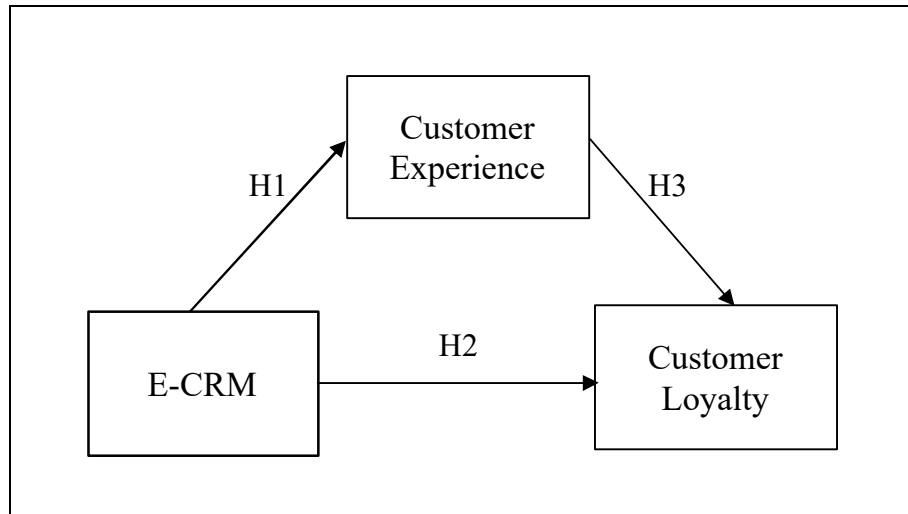
In Algeria, e-CRM adoption in the telecommunication industry appears to be promising (Meddah and Charef, 2022). Benhabib and Ghanem (2020) found that use of e-CRM technologies by Algerian telecom companies has led to remarkable improvement in customer experience and loyalty. The study advocates that the e-CRM systems allow such companies to manage customer data efficiently, follow up on the pattern of service uses, and cater to potential problems in the best possible manner, ensuring a smooth and gratifying customer journey.

Additionally, the integration of e-CRM with mobile applications and social media services has made this impact more effective on customer experience as well as loyalty. As Khelifa (2021) pointed out, the use of mobile apps and social media in e-CRM strategies continuously engages customers with companies, enables real-time support and feedback, lines up a series of processes and activities, among others, that are very important. This continuous engagement fosters a sense of community and trust among customers, which is essential for building long-term loyalty.

3. Framework and Hypotheses

To examine the effect of e-CRM on customer experience and loyalty, a theoretical framework was developed based on previous studies. As shown in Figure 01, the framework suggests that e-CRM affects both customer experience and customer loyalty, and it also suggests that customer experience affects customer loyalty.

Fig.1. Theoretical Framework



Source: Authors' own work based on previous studies

3.1 Electronic customer relationship management (E-CRM)

Electronic customer relationship management is the act of managing the relationship and transactions using technology. It integrates traditional CRM practices with professional communications available across websites, e-mail, social media and mobile applications to continuously improve customer engagement, service delivery and relationship management (Mendoza et al., 2007). According to Strauss and Frost (2012), e-CRM involves using web-based technologies to attract, store and grow customer relationships through automated processes, as well as provide personalized communication.

E-CRM greatly improves the experience of customers and their loyalty by using digital technologies to offer services that are personalized, efficient, and responsive. In the telecom sector, research such as that of Eid's (2011) has revealed that e-CRM enhances the level of customer-satisfaction and their loyalty due to customized service offering and responsive service delivery. Likewise, Kumar and Mokha (2021) revealed that e-CRM has a direct and significant effect on enhancing customer experience and, thus, making customers more satisfied with the services by creating a differentiating experience. In addition, Awasthi and Sangle (2013) reported that e-CRM practices in the Indian telecom sector lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty due to the

personalization of services and efficient service delivery. However, beyond this, e-CRM has been registered to have positive effects in other sectors as well. For instance, Sin et al. (2005) reported that e-CRM fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty in the banking sector through improving service convenience and customization. On the other hand, e-CRM is critically beneficial to enhancing customer relations and customer experience in several industries. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: E-CRM positively affects customer experience.

H2: E-CRM positively affects customer loyalty.

3.2 Customer Experience

Customer experience can be described as how customers perceive their experience with a company at all touchpoints, all the way from the initial contact to post-purchase (Forrester, 2011). It consists of various attributes, such as quality in the customer care division, ease of navigation on the website, efficiency in delivering services, emotional experience that customers get from the communication of the brand to customers particularly in as far as the company's products are concerned (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

A number of research papers have presented fairly concrete conclusions that it exists a link between customer experience and customer loyalty across different sectors and contexts. Verhoef et al. (2009) revealed how positive customer experience leads to customer retention and increase loyalty level. Furthermore, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) underlined a link between enhancing the overall customer experience and customer loyalty that tends to be built in the long term relationship, indicating the importance of going above and beyond and meeting customer expectations in order to build emphasize loyalty, which ensured customer loyalty. These findings strongly emphasize the importance of creating a positive customer experience in a relationship that can foster long-term customer loyalty. Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Customer experience positively affects customer loyalty.

3.3 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a state whereby the customers remain loyal to a service or product provider, continues to use their services or products, and becomes a brand advocate based on sustained satisfaction and perceived value (Kotler and Keller, 2006). From another point of view, Oliver (1999) define customer loyalty as an ongoing future repurchase of a favorite product or service, with a deep commitment to support or do it again despite situational influences and marketing

efforts, which leads to the purchase of the same product or products often, and can cause them to change.

4. Methodology

A quantitative research design is followed by using survey procedures for the study, and then SPSS has been applied to analyze the data after it is collected. The descriptive analysis depicts an overall picture of the dataset, and reliability tests within SPSS ensure that survey items are consistent and valid. The hypotheses are tested by simple regression analysis using SPSS as an analysis tool for the discovery of relationships among variables. This integrated approach facilitates rigorous data processing and analysis, enabling the derivation of meaningful insights and conclusive findings.

4.1 Variable measurement

A survey instrument is utilized for data collection and a key reason for its appropriateness lies in its ability to appropriately meet the objectives of this study. This instrument has provisions for assessing the influences of independent variables on dependent variables (Groves et al., 2009). This survey is based on conventional procedures of designing existing instruments, mainly evidenced by information in Table 1, which lists each variable and its items. The items in this variable have been validated in prior studies and proven to be reliable in testing questionnaires within different national contexts.

Table 1. Measurement scales

Construct	Number of items	Reference
E-CRM	18	Kumar and Mokha (2021)
Customer Experience	4	Lacej and Kalaj (2015)
Customer Loyalty	4	Akroush et al. (2011)

Source: Authors' own work based on previous studies

4.2 Sample Characteristics

To collect data, an electronic questionnaire was used, distributed through Google Forms on social media. With this method, it was easy to collect responses among the customers of Mobilis telecom company, a mobile operator based in Algeria. In total, 119 were collected; all could be used during the data analysis phase.

Table 2 reveals that the respondents comprised 61 females (51.4%) and 58 males (48.7%), indicating an almost equal gender distribution. The majority of respondents were within the age ranges of 25–34 (54.4%) and 35–44 (32.8%) years, reflecting the characteristics of the young

Algerian population (Boukhelkhal, 2022). This demographic grew up during the age of ICT, internet connectivity, and social media (Agrawal, 2022), making them more likely to engage with brands through e-CRM tools and share their consumption experiences on digital platforms (Khan, 2022). Regarding education level, as shown in Table 2, 50.4% of respondents had postgraduate education, 45.4% had university-level education, and 4.2% had a high school education.

Table 2. Demographics analysis

Variable	Responses choice	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	61	51.4
	Male	58	48.7
Age	Less than 25 years old	19	16
	25 – 34 years old	54	54.4
	35 – 44 years old	35	32.8
	45 – 54 years old	6	5
	More than 55 years old	1	0.8
Education Level	High school	5	4.2
	University	54	45.4
	Postgraduate	60	50.4

Source: Authors' own work based on SPSS output

5. Results

5.1 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for each of the constructs in the study to provide a preliminary assessment of the reliability and convergent validity of the measurements. As shown in Table 3, the α Cronbach values range from 0.826 to 0.931, all of which exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). This indicates that the measurements are internally consistent and reliable.

Table 3. Reliability analysis

Construct	Number of items	α Cronbach
E-CRM	18	0.926
Customer Experience	4	0.931
Customer Loyalty	4	0.826

Source: Authors' own work based on SPSS output

5.2 Correlation Analysis

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate significant positive correlations between the examined variables. Specifically, the correlation coefficient between e-CRM and customer experience is ($r = 0.701$); between e-CRM and customer loyalty, it is ($r = 0.402$); lastly, between customer experience and loyalty, it is ($r = 0.491$). All significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

These results indicate that improvements in e-CRM are significantly associated with improved customer experience, as evidenced by a high correlation coefficient of 0.701. This indicates that effective e-CRM practices play an important role in shaping positive customer experiences. Additionally, the moderate correlation between e-CRM and customer loyalty ($r = 0.402$) shows that e-CRM efforts are also significantly related to greater customer loyalty. Furthermore, the correlation between customer experience and loyalty ($r = 0.491$) highlights how important a good customer experience is for building customer loyalty. The fact that these correlations are statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level confirms the reliability of these relationships.

Table 4. Correlation

Construct	E-CRM	CX	CL
E-CRM	1		
CE	0.701**	1	
CL	0.402**	0.491**	1
N=119		**p<0.01	
Note: CX: customer experience;		CL: customer loyalty	

Source: Authors' own work based on SPSS output

5.2 Model Evaluation and Hypotheses Testing

The results of simple linear regression analysis are displayed in Table 5 below and provide strong support for the proposed hypotheses. Firstly, the relationship between e-CRM and customer experience (CX) is significant ($\beta = 0.701$, $t = 10.626$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that e-CRM practices have a significant positive influence on enhancing the overall customer experience. Secondly, the value of R-square is 0.491, which means that almost half (49.1%) of customer experience variance can be explained by e-CRM, justifying the pivotal role of e-CRM in shaping customer perceptions and interplays. Thirdly, the direct effect of e-CRM on customer loyalty (CL) is also significant ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 4.745$, $p < 0.001$), and hence, this effect would clarify that e-CRM proves to be of significant importance in increasing customer loyalty. While the value of the R square is 0.161, which means e-CRM explains a smaller percentage of the variance in customer loyalty than

customer experience, it still seems to be a key factor in keeping customers loyal. Finally, the significant impact of customer experience on customer loyalty is statistically supported ($\beta = 0.491$, $t = 6.092$, $p < 0.001$), indicating the fact that higher customer experience is more likely to lead to customer loyalty. With the R square value of 0.241 (24.1%), this relationship clarifies that nearly a quarter of the variance in customer loyalty can be explained by customer experience, underscoring the significance of prioritizing customer experience enhancement initiatives. Furthermore, the F statistic test for each hypothesis also shows that the whole model is significant. This means the model has a good predictive power.

Table 5. Simple linear regression analysis results

Hypotheses	Beta	T Statistics	F Statistics	R-square	Results
H1: E-CRM → CX	0.701	10.626***	112.902***	0.491	Supported
H2: E-CRM → CL	0.402	4.745***	22.514***	0.161	Supported
H3: CX → CL	0.491	6.092***	37.117***	0.241	Supported
N=119		***p<0.001			

Note: CX: customer experience; CL: customer loyalty

Source: Authors' own work based on SPSS output

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study shows clear evidence that e-CRM greatly affects customer experience and loyalty in the Algerian telecommunications sector. From the regression analysis, the findings show that e-CRM significantly influences customer experience ($\beta = 0.701$, $p < 0.001$) and customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$). The results confirm that for customers of Mobilis Telecom Company, e-CRM systems should be fully and effectively implemented so as to shape good customer perceptions and make them loyal to the company. Most interestingly, the substantial e-CRM effect on customer experience is striking. One thing to note is that customers feel more valued and satisfied when the e-CRM techniques are used effectively on the part of Mobilis Telecom Company. Personalized communication, quick responses and customized service seem to enhance customer experience. This finding is consistent with existing literature that has specifically positioned e-CRM as a key tool to improve customer service and enhance customer experience (Rapp et al., 2010; Alshawhi et al., 2011). The study further portrays the fact that there is a significant and positive relationship between customer experience and customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that there should be substantial customer experiences being delivered, or customers are getting to have a positive experience on the part of Mobilis Telecom Company who are likely to be loyal and continue their relationship with the company. This finding is in accordance with the broad literature

saying that the customers, if provided with excellent experiences, will reciprocate with loyalty to the company (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Homburg et al., 2017).

These findings have numerous practical implications for management at companies within the mobile telecommunications industry. Investment in more sophisticated e-CRM systems should be a strategic priority. Companies should concentrate on investing in technology that will create personalized, efficient, and seamless customer experience. By taking this action, they will greatly enhance the customer experience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Technology-based customer service systems have been proved to improve customer service works while leading to more personalize experience with the customer (Nguyen and Mutum, 2012; Chahal and Kumari, 2014). Continuous improvement in customer experience should be an integral part of customer relationship strategies. Telecommunication companies should continuously evaluate their service delivery processes and continue to make adjustments that bring their results to and beyond their customers' expectations. This can be achieved by training employees, adding new technologies, and monitoring customer feedback so-called surveying to pinpoint improvement areas. Customer-centric perspective which emphasizes continual improvement of customer experience has been proved to significantly impact customer retention and loyalty (Bolton et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2009).

In conclusion, this research makes it clear that e-CRM and customer experience are key drivers toward customer loyalty. Mobile telecommunication companies in this sector are able to achieve long-term loyalty and a sustained competitive advantage when highly effective e-CRM strategies are developed and consistently superior customer experiences are obtained.

7. Limitations and Future Studies

Nevertheless, this research work is equally not without certain limitations. The survey with 119 people, is seen as enough for initial understanding, but it may not completely represent the entire customer population of Mobilis Telecom Company. In the future, researchers should include a larger sample size among the respondents from a more diverse category so that the findings can be generalized and applied at a wider level. Furthermore, the study only examined a single company, thus the results of this study cannot be used in other companies or industries. Delving into e-CRM's influence in different contexts and sectors for a better understanding could potentially lead to a more holistic idea. Researchers can also further elaborate on the study's findings by investigating the element of e-CRM which is the most influential in terms of different market segments and geographical areas. This work will enable the process of turning potential leads into profitable customers, monitoring customer responses to offers.

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