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Strategic Sensitivity and Operations Efficiency of Communication Companies in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency of communication companies in Nigeria, as well as the moderating role of decision support systems in this relationship. The study employed a cross-sectional survey methodology, using three major communication companies in Nigeria as the target population. Data were obtained through questionnaires and summarized in their respective groups. The study applied the inferential statistical tool of Spearman's rank order correlation to test the level of significance among variables. SPSS version 21.0 was utilized for the analysis. The study found that there is a significant relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria. The analysis revealed a very strong positive correlation between these variables ($\rho = 0.915$, $P = 0.000$), indicating that strategic sensitivity strongly contributes to improved levels of operational efficiency. Additionally, the research discovered that decision support systems play a positive moderating role in this relationship. The indirect relationship ($R = 0.480$) and direct relationship ($R = 0.394$) both showed positive correlations, with significant p-values ($PV = 0.000$ for indirect relationship, $P = 0.12$ for direct relationship). These findings led to the rejection of both null hypotheses, demonstrating that strategic sensitivity is crucial for operational efficiency and that decision support systems enhance this relationship. The study also noted that communication companies in Nigeria actively engage in practices reflecting strategic sensitivity (mean = 3.3343) and adequately express features of operational efficiency (mean = 3.2567), suggesting a strong emphasis on these aspects in the Nigerian communication sector. The study concludes that there is a positive relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria. The study recommends that communication companies in Nigeria should prioritize and maintain their strategic sensitivity activities, given the significant relationship identified between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency. Companies should invest in developing and refining their strategic sensitivity capabilities, including market analysis, trend forecasting, and adaptive planning. Furthermore, the study recommends that communication companies should focus on improving their managerial competence in handling strategic sensitivity over the long term. Companies should also consider implementing leadership development programs that emphasize strategic sensitivity and its practical application in operational contexts.

Keywords: *Strategic sensitivity, agility, customer satisfaction, operations efficiency, Communication Companies, Nigeria*

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1.0 Introduction

Communication can be defined as the giving, receiving, or exchanging of information, opinions or ideas so that the message is completely understood by everybody involved. The high demand for communication has created many revenue opportunities and organizations. The need for relevance and keeping up with the competition in the communication industry has become an issue for innovation and innovation capabilities, which has a direct link to operations efficiency (Lawrence & Poi, 2021). Since the revolution witnessed in Nigeria's communication sector between 2000 and 2011 and given that a revolution could be described as a radical and abrupt change of circumstances or system, the Nigerian communication industry quickly catapulted to national and international attention. Within a ten-year space, Nigeria became one of the largest and fastest growing telecoms markets in Africa and the world at large, which hints at its robustness towards returns on investments.

This was not always the case; the development of communication facilities in Nigeria began in 1886, when a cable connection was established between Lagos and London by the colonial administration (Bakare 2011). Subsequently, from 1893, government offices in Lagos were provided with telephone service, which was later extended to Ilorin and Jebba in the hinterland (Bakare 2011). Later on, the government allocated substantial funds towards communication infrastructures; unfortunately, their goals were not met due to funds misappropriation (Ajibola 2005). Nevertheless, in the 90s, the Nigerian communication industry recorded some positive developments. Since then, the industry has grown larger, as have the challenges, especially for the operators, which affected customers and profits. Irrespective of this, communication as it is today has become explosive, and with the help of globalization, new trends and applications can be adopted locally to enhance communication. Thus, the global economy has made these communication firms stay on their toes to avoid outdatedness.

The communication industry currently is focused on the end goal that forces and pushes for change and rivalry. Also, the introduction of digital technologies into its workspace has not made it easier, but rather has put many organizations on their toes, making them evolve. The need for relevance has become increasingly important daily; hardly is any firm safe from obsolescence. This has led to organizational turbulence and dynamic competitive environments in order to keep their customers. The urge to redefine and become industry pace-setters has added to the uncertainties and disruptive innovations experienced in industries like information technology and automobile. For an organization to thrive in such situations, it must become resilient and agile. Regardless of previous strategic plans, such organizations will be willing to modify and adjust to contemporary changes as they relate to profits and organizational goals (Doz & Kosonen, 2010).

According to Kettunen (2009), intensified global competition, diversification of demand and technologies, reduction in lead-time and life expectancy of products are factors that influence industrial change – as well as wars and pandemics. Firms are forced to cope with and tolerate what is being thrown at them. Scholars see that in competing, most companies disregard the need to link their plans and vision with the arising elements of their unique circumstances. This perception was repeated by Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson (2016), who noted that one of the significant reasons firms become obsolete is their failure to secure practices on the hidden context-oriented qualities and assumptions that have over time solidified into real factors of the specific circumstance. This resonates with Jain & Moreno (2015), who explain that the hidden

background qualities are fundamental in setting up and propelling a more powerful market position and approach.

These hidden context-oriented qualities can also be termed as being strategically sensitive, being able to adapt and readapt as the need arises. Strategic sensitivity is the ability for firms to aggressively look for and gather operational data, adjust this into information (by filtering it for relevancy, timeliness, accuracy, and content), interpret and analyze the urgency, causes and impact of the derived information, and as such, anticipate or spot opportunities and threats in the business environment (Overby, Bharadwaj & Sambamurthy, 2006). It can be futuristic as well as focus on the present functions of the organization and its environment (Pulaj & Pulaj, 2015). Its primary concern is addressing uncertainties by planning the best course of action based on learning and predictions of the future (Agbeche, Lawrence, Okechukwu & Elechi, 2021) – which requires clarity and agility in information processing.

On the other hand, the need to develop and maintain sustainable competitiveness is at the foundation of operations strategy, which draws on several intertwined yet distinct elements, including organizational capabilities, practices, and resources. Operational abilities are the secret ingredients in explaining the development and maintenance of competitiveness. Though they are often overlooked because they are tightly embedded in the organizational fabric of an operations system, the attention of decision makers is usually drawn to more obvious assets, such as resources and operational practices. Furthermore, there is confusion concerning what operational efficiency is and what distinguishes operational efficiencies from resources or practices, because they are closely linked.

Therefore, much of the impact of operations efficiencies is often attributed to resources or operations practices. Because they emerge gradually and are tightly associated with a firm's distinctive features, operational efficiencies tend to blend into the background. Yet, their traits are distinct and create a barrier to imitation, making them a potential source of competitive advantage – implying that business leaders must have emotional intelligence as well in order to enhance their strategic sensitivity (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2020). Notwithstanding the discussions on the issue of operations efficiency and strategic sensitivity, researchers have carried out studies on both variables separately, using different indicators from the ones used in this study. Hence, this research study is focused on Nigeria, as it relates to determining how strategic sensitivity impacts innovation capabilities of communication companies in Nigeria. The process of achieving the inquiry is anchored on two research hypotheses.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria is not significant.

Ho2: Decision support systems do not significantly moderate the relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria. This visual representation illustrates the relationship between strategic sensitivity as the independent variable and operations efficiency as the

dependent variable, while also showing the moderating role of decision support systems in this relationship.

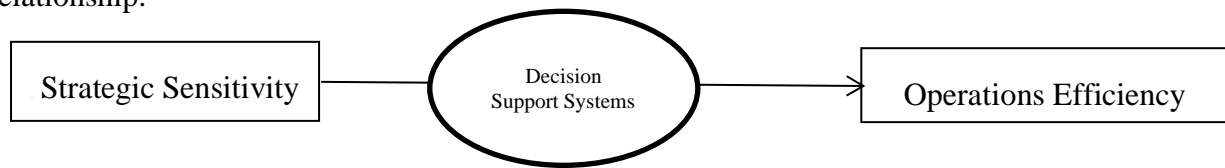


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for Strategic Sensitivity and Operations Efficiency

Source: Conceptualized by the Researchers (2024)

This study is divided into four (4) sections: the introductory part, the literature review section, the methodology adopted for the study, finding of the study, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

A theoretical foundation is the lens from which all knowledge is constructed either metaphorically or literally for a research study. The adaptive theory was adopted for this study because it focuses on a firm's capacity to bend to change its present state of affairs easily. Thus, for an organization and individual to survive it must have the tenacity to adapt to every and any organization climate it finds itself (Ram, 2021).

Strategic Sensitivity

Strategic sensitivity is defined as the sharpness of perception. According to Abiodun (2009), it can be measured on a business level via aggressiveness, analysis, defensiveness, futurity, proactiveness, and riskiness. The aggressiveness dimension measures a business's ability to engage organizational resources in executing aggressive strategies and pursuing increased market share to achieve profitability. Analysis refers to the ability to investigate deeply into the foundational causes of problems and develop the best alternative solutions. Defensiveness reflects a firm's emphasis on defense strategies over its core technology and product-market domain through cost minimization and operational efficiency techniques. This posture relates to defender traits, defensive actions, niche marketing, cost reduction, and niche differentiation.

Futurity is the degree to which decisions related to possible future incidents are seriously engaged, which can be termed forecasting (Bradley, MacKay & Costanzo, 2009). Proactiveness reflects a firm's continuous engagement in exploring new market opportunities while strategically withdrawing old products from markets. It shows the degree of a firm's experimentation with marketing research responses and describes its initiative for a first-mover spot in the market (Chang, Lin, Wea & Sheu, 2002). Abiodun (2009) opined that the riskiness measure captures the extent of a firm's perilousness, reflected in its resource allocation decisions and general decision-making patterns. Firms with high-risk strategies may trade off lower profits than expected, although R&D investment is important for new product development. These dimensions of strategic sensitivity can be seen in strategic clarity and agility, as an organization must be lucid and agile to defend, analyze, and become proactive.

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Strategic clarity is the ability to respond swiftly to changes using information technology to share data, integrate processes, and coordinate networks. It supports product development through collaboration between partners and a thriving network linked to the strength of its partners (Mavengere, 2009). Long (2000) identified seven dimensions of strategic clarity: vision clarity, clientele knowledge, understanding of fundamental capabilities, choosing strategic targets and objectives, shared responsibility, knowledge of competitors, and taking action measured as strategic agility. Strategic agility is described as the quickness with necessary capabilities to meet rapidly changing market needs and customer demands on time (Ganguly, Nilchiani & Farr, 2009). An agile organization can be successful in a competitive environment through responsiveness, competence, flexibility, and speed to achieve competitive advantage. Agility directly affects a company's ability to produce and distribute new products cost-effectively (Ojha, 2008).

Operations Efficiency

Competitive advantage is the bedrock of operational strategy. This is drawn from several entwined yet distinct elements, such as organizational capabilities, practices and resources to guarantee development and maintenance of the organizational sustainable competitive advantage. The exceptionality of every successful firm is in their operational ability because, it clarifies development and maintenance based on the competitiveness. However, due to being embedded in the organizational fabric of the operations system, their impact is not noticed. Nevertheless, operations efficiency is different from other skills, processes, and routines for radically evolving organizations. This is because of the strategies involved in creating and implementing these new and distinct operational process. In addition, the operational improvement builds upon existing corporate abilities thereby improbable to lead to innovations that expressively set off from the current technological or market competencies. Accordingly, Benner and Tushman (2003), operational innovation highlights the variance and experimentation that alter the technological trajectories and associated organizational competencies. This finding suggested a focus on operational innovation on large scale, for a radical process changes to occur through either a new knowledge or a departure from existing skills. It will result in very different processes and resource configuration than incremental change to the existing processes.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with the good or service over time (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha & Bryant 1996). Every organization's success depends on the satisfied customers. Whenever a business is about to start, clients always come first and then the revenue. Those organizations that are impress their customers usual remain in the market's top position. Customer satisfaction is a barometer that predicts future customer behavior (Hill, Roche & Allen 2007). Thus, customer satisfaction is the key component for the success communication companies and at the same time, it plays a vital role to increase their market value. In general, customers are those people who buy goods and services from the market or business that meet their needs and wants. Customers purchase products to meet their expectations in terms of money. Consequently, communication companies and others should determine their pricing with the quality of the product that attracts the customer and maintains the long-term affiliation. With marketing, customer satisfaction also comes along with it which means it ascertains the expectation of the customer on how the goods and services are being facilitated by the

companies. Actionable information on how to make customers further satisfied is, therefore, a crucial outcome (Oliver, 1999.). At a glance, customer satisfaction is a crucial component of a business strategy as well as customer retention and product repurchase. To maximize customer satisfaction companies should sell ideas and methods after the completion of all the necessary documents.

Decision Support Systems

A decision support system is a computer-based application or program that compiles, combines, and analyzes raw data, documents, fundamentals of social science, applied science, mathematics, and managerial science, and personal knowledge to identify problems and determine their solutions to facilitate optimal decision making. A decision support system is an interactive computer application that has complete access to information about your organization. When used, it offers qualified figures between one period and the next. It projects revenue figures based on assumptions related to product sales. A DSS is smart enough to help you understand the expenses involved and the consequences resulting from different decision alternatives. A decision support system helps overcome the barriers to good decision-making, including lack of experience, biasness, shortage of time, wrong calculations and not considering alternatives.

Strategic Sensitivity and Operations Efficiency

Adnan (2015) claim of operational efficiency as what determines a company's ability to provide products and services effectively while maintaining quality through quick response and agility. For communication companies to increase efficiency within their organization they must reduce call connection delays and stress the importance of communication amongst its employees. Also, Mavengere (2013) work on information technology's role in supply chain's strategic agility in the University of Tampere, Finland. He confirmed that strategic agility is a business imperative, especially in a competitive business environment. The findings confirmed the different roles IT played to promote strategic agility in different parts of the supply chain. Likewise, for a communication company to increase its business proficiency, such firm must develop responsive skills, create a sound plan and continue to stay flexible – even though there are multiple strategies an organization can apply to boost its innovativeness it must ensure that will not tamper on its profit and productivity. Which resonates with Tutar, Nart, and Bingol (2015) study on the effects of strategic orientations on innovation capabilities and market performance: the case of ASEM of the furniture market in Sakarya. Who found out that proactive market orientation, proactive entrepreneurial orientation, and technology orientation were positively related to innovation capabilities – which was broken down into operation performance and staff capacity.

Strategic sensitivity plays a key role between strategic orientation and market performance. Branczei & Vertinsky (2006) study on strategic pathways to product innovation capabilities in SMEs. Their study articulated a two-dimensional typology of dynamic capabilities, grouping them by the life-cycle stage and the timing of expected returns. Using a cross-industry sample of manufacturing SMEs, validating and mapping four distinct innovation strategies onto specific sets of product innovation capabilities and operations efficiencies. Their results showed that human capital development efforts catalyze both the external absorption and the internal emergence of novel capabilities. Stronger emphasis on firms' agility, product features and broader market access can stimulate the effective replication of extant capabilities, yielding immediate payoffs. Hence process-focused strategies are a double-edged sword: they facilitate

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the acquisition and incorporation of external insights yet bound internal capability development – which relates to sensitivity and agility. Hence, strategic sensitivity enhances process innovation of organization. López-Mielgo *et al.* (2009) reported that especially process innovations exert a positive influence on the total quality management efforts of the organizations. Besides the speed and quality aspects, innovative performance is also related to the two other elements of production performance: namely, flexibility (agility and responsiveness) and cost-efficiency. Success in the renewal efforts especially in administrative mechanisms, production processes, and new products can contribute extensively to the dissemination of knowledge and effectiveness of coordination within the organization, which are necessary for operational flexibility and decreased related costs (Koufteros and Marcoulides, 2006). In this regard, Liu *et al.* (2009) also confirm in an empirical study the positive relationship between operational flexibility and new product success.

3.0 Methods and Materials

The study employed a cross-sectional survey methodology to resolve the research inquiry, using the three major communication companies in Nigeria as the target population. Data were obtained through questionnaires and summarized in their respective groups, with analyses based on percentages. The researchers applied the inferential statistical tool of Spearman's rank order correlation to test the level of significance among variables. SPSS version 21.0 was utilized for the analysis. This approach allowed the researchers to gather comprehensive data from a representative sample of the communication industry in Nigeria, providing insights into the relationships between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency. By using both descriptive and inferential statistics, the study aimed to provide a robust examination of the research hypotheses and contribute to the understanding of strategic management in the Nigerian communication sector.

4.0 Findings

Result and Frequency Analysis

In this section, the output of the primary and secondary data is presented. Analysis was carried out on individual variables and measures. Mean scores and standard deviations are also illustrated. The presentation begins with the independent variable, which is strategic sensitivity. It then proceeds to the dependent variable- operations efficiency, whose measures are customer's satisfaction and revenue generation. The secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank-order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the test cover hypothesis H_0 , which was bivariate and all stated in the null form. Relying on the spearman rank (ρ) statistic to undertake the analysis, the 0.05 significance level is adopted as a criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1: Summary for dimensions of strategic sensitivity

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Strategic sensitivity	67	3.3343	.82122	-1.419	.293	1.282	.578
Valid N (listwise)	67						

Source: Research Data, 2022

The result for the summary distribution on the dimensions of strategic sensitivity demonstrates their prevalence within the context of the communication companies in Nigeria. The evidence illustrates that these communication companies are actively engaged in practices that reflect the strategic sensitivity ($x = 3.334$).

Table 2: Summary for measures of Operations Efficiency

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Operations efficiency	67	3.2567	.83325	-1.146	.293	.399	.578
Valid N (listwise)	67						

Source: Research Data, 2022

The summary distribution for the operational efficiency as demonstrated in Table 2 describes the variable as evident and characterizing as the behavior of the telecommunication companies in Nigeria. Results from the analysis show, that the communication companies adequately express features concerned with Operational Efficiency ($x = 3.2567$). From the table, it is evident that these communication companies appear to be stronger and more emphatic on the Operational Efficiency.

Table 3: Strategic Sensitivity and Operations Efficiency

			Strategic sensitivity	Operations efficiency
Spearman's rho	Operations efficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.915**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	67	67

Source: Research Data, 2022

The relationship between strategic sensitivity and operational efficiency ($\rho = 0.915$ and $P = 0.000$) is observed to be very strong. The evidence demonstrates that strategic sensitivity to a very strong extent contributes and necessitates outcomes that reflect improved and enhanced levels of operational efficiency; thus, suggesting that Strategic sensitivity is imperative for the actualization of operational efficiency in telecommunication companies in Nigeria. On the basis of $P < 0.05$ the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: Test for Moderating Role of Decision Support Systems

Control Variables			Strategic Sensitivity	Operations Efficiency	Decision Support systems
-none ^a	Strategic Sensitivity	Correlation	1.000	.480	.414
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		Df	0	119	119
	Operations Efficiency	Correlation	.480	1.000	.347
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		Df	119	0	119
Decision support systems	Correlation	.414	.347	1.000	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
	Df	119	119	0	
Market culture	Strategic Sensitivity	Correlation	1.000	.394	.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		Df	0	118	
	Operations Efficiency	Correlation	.394	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		Df	118	0	

Source: Research Output, 2023

The study found that decision support systems play a positive moderating role in the relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency of communication companies in Nigeria. This conclusion was drawn from the analysis presented in Table 4, which showed an R-value of 0.480 for the indirect relationship and 0.394 for the direct relationship, both indicating a positive correlation. The significance of this moderating effect was further confirmed by the p-values, with $PV = 0.000$ for the indirect relationship and $P = 0.12$ for the direct relationship. These results led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_02), which stated that there is no moderating role of decision support systems on the relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency of communication companies in Nigeria. The findings suggest that the use of decision support systems can enhance the positive impact of strategic sensitivity on operations efficiency in these companies, potentially offering a valuable tool for improving overall organizational performance in the Nigerian communication sector.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics of strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria. The first key finding reveals a significant relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency competence. This suggests that communication companies that are more strategically sensitive tend to demonstrate higher levels of operational efficiency. Strategic sensitivity, as measured by factors such as aggressiveness, analysis, defensiveness, futurity, proactiveness, and riskiness (Abiodun, 2009), appears to contribute positively to a company's ability to optimize its operations. This relationship underscores the importance of developing and maintaining a keen awareness of market trends, competitive landscapes, and internal capabilities to enhance operational performance. The second major finding indicates that decision support systems play a positive moderating role in the relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency. This suggests that the implementation and effective use of decision support systems can enhance the positive impact of strategic sensitivity on operational efficiency. Decision support systems, by providing timely and relevant information, appear to strengthen a company's ability to translate strategic insights into operational improvements. This finding highlights the potential value of investing in advanced information systems and analytics tools to augment strategic decision-making processes and ultimately improve operational outcomes in the highly competitive and rapidly evolving communication industry in Nigeria.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a strong positive relationship between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency in communication companies in Nigeria. This relationship underscores the critical role that strategic sensitivity plays in shaping the operational performance of these companies. The ability of a firm to be strategically sensitive, as demonstrated through its capacity to perceive and respond to market changes, competitive pressures, and internal capabilities, significantly influences its operational efficiency. This conclusion suggests that the strategic moves, actions, and reactions of competing firms in the Nigerian communication industry are largely determined by their capability to adjust and refine their strategic sensitivity in response to dynamic business environments. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate a notable disparity in performance between companies with high and low knowledge cultures. Communication companies that exhibit a low knowledge culture tend to perform below expectations when compared to their counterparts in the same industry. This conclusion highlights the importance of fostering a strong knowledge culture within organizations, which encompasses continuous learning, information sharing, and the application of insights to strategic decision-making processes. The underperformance of companies with low knowledge cultures suggests that the cultivation of a robust knowledge ecosystem within an organization is not just beneficial but essential for maintaining competitiveness and operational efficiency in the rapidly evolving communication sector in Nigeria.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that communication companies in Nigeria should prioritize and maintain their strategic sensitivity activities, given the significant relationship identified between strategic sensitivity and operations efficiency. This approach has been shown to increase operational efficiency and improve profits. Special attention should be paid to strategic

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sensitivity as it is a key driver of competitive behavior, operational efficiency, and innovation capability. Companies should invest in developing and refining their strategic sensitivity capabilities, including market analysis, trend forecasting, and adaptive planning. This could involve regular strategic reviews, investment in market research tools, and the cultivation of a culture that values and responds to strategic insights. Furthermore, the study recommends that communication companies should focus on improving their managerial competence in handling strategic sensitivity over the long term. This involves developing a more sophisticated and nuanced approach to strategic management that can adapt to the rapidly changing telecommunications landscape. Managers should be trained in advanced strategic thinking techniques, scenario planning, and agile decision-making processes. Companies should also consider implementing leadership development programs that emphasize strategic sensitivity and its practical application in operational contexts. Additionally, fostering a knowledge-sharing culture within the organization can help enhance the overall strategic competence of the management team, leading to more effective long-term strategic planning and execution.

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