



BMMB7013 Strategic Management

Developing A New Landscape For Customer Care for MTN

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1. Executive Summary

This report outlines a strategic initiative for MTN, a major African telecommunications company providing voice, data, fintech, digital, enterprise, wholesale and API services to more than 292 million customers in 19 markets (MTN, 2022). This research study made use of mixed methods to analyse the nature of MTN's current business landscape.

Firstly, the research involved performing a detailed analysis of the external and internal environment within the context of the organisation and how this impacts the strategy on how MTN can reshape its approach to customer care. Through a comprehensive analysis utilizing Michael Porter's Five Forces, Ansoff's Growth Matrix, SWOT Analysis, Pestle Analysis and other strategic management concepts, the report aims to provide further insights into the org and external factors. Based on the critical evaluations of strategic options, recommendations will be made on how MTN can provide innovative, personalized customer care, ensuring future resilience and sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic environment.

To aid in providing more context, the research included data on pricing, promotional offerings and loyalty programmes offered by MTN and other telecommunications companies. The research paper also took into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on the Telecommunications industry and how companies adapted in-order to continue offering customers quality services and products. Since customers choose their mobile telecommunications providers based on more than just price, the research used a non-price comparison methodology to evaluate how mobile operators competed on quality, coverage, reputation, and brand awareness, as well as the effects of these factors on

the ability of mobile providers to compete successfully. The quantitative data included in this analysis was gathered from a number of sources, including industry reports, mobile operators' annual financial reports, government department portals as well as industry regulatory bodies such as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) and Compcon (Competition Commission of South Africa).

The research study also analysed the impact of latest technologies such as AI, and how these are influencing customer service offerings.

2. Introduction

MTN faces the challenge of adapting its strategic direction to deliver innovative customer care amidst a fast-paced and challenging environment. This is according to a report by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (www.gov.za, n.d.) which outlines challenges faced by Telco companies operating in South Africa. This report aims to provide a roadmap for creatively reshaping MTN's strategy to ensure resilience and competitive advantage. The analysis considers the lingering economic impact of the pandemic, global volatility, and competitive pressures from major Telco's such as Vodacom, Telkom, Cell C, Rain (Mybroadband, 2022).

3. MAIN FINDINGS OF STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

3.1 EXTERNAL CONTEXT:

3.1.1 Economic Factors:

Economic Environment: The South African economy's health significantly impacts MTN. Economic growth, inflation rates, and exchange rates play a vital role in the company's financial performance (Hill & Hult, 2020). This can be further illustrated through the four areas below:

3.1.1.1 Job Creation: MTN's contributions to economic growth, as evident in reports, involve job creation, leading to improved living standards and social services (Malinga, 2023)

3.1.1.2 Inclusive Economic Growth: The company, particularly in South Africa, plays a role in driving inclusive economic growth, positively impacting communities across the country (MTN.com, n.d.)

3.1.1.3 Navigating Uncertainty: Economic uncertainty, including changes in technology, regulation, competition, and customer expectations, poses challenges for MTN. The company must adapt to these economic shifts to remain competitive. (MTN.com, n.d.)

3.1.2 Regulatory Environment: The telecommunications sector in South Africa is regulated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), (Moyo & Hlongwane, 2009). The

telecommunications industry is subject to strict regulations. Compliance with these regulations affects MTN's operations, pricing strategies, and overall business model (Johnson et al., 2017).

3.1.3 Technological Trends: MTN has been at the forefront of rolling out new technologies in the telecommunications space with advancements such as the rollout of 5G (MTN, 2020). Technological trends impact MTN's infrastructure investments, service offerings, and competitive positioning (Hill & Hult, 2020).

3.1.4 Competitive Landscape: The telecommunications sector in South Africa is competitive, with multiple players namely; Vodacom, Telkom, Cellc and Rain.

Biggest telecoms companies in South Africa — June 2023		
Company	Share price as of 7 June 2023	Market value
MTN	R130.56	R241.51 billion
Vodacom	R115.63	R240.05 billion
Maziv (Vumatel + DFA)	n/a	R23.8 billion*
Rain	n/a	R18 billion*
Telkom	R28.17	R14.23 billion
Blue Label Telecoms	R3.67	R3.42 billion
Huge Group Limited	R2.74	R472.82 million
TeleMasters Holdings Limited	R0.98	R56.33 million

**Rain and Maziv are not listed companies, and their valuations come from an estimation of their worth reported in their respective parent companies' financial statements. As such, they should be carefully scrutinised.*

Fig 1.0 Biggest telecoms companies in South Africa as of June 2023. Source: MyBroadband

3.1.5 Understanding competitors' strategies is crucial for MTN to differentiate itself and maintain market share (Johnson et al., 2017). As new competitors enter the market, competition has increased as the global telecommunications sectors have developed. Given the widespread influence of telecommunications on the competitiveness of all businesses and sectors, there are significant advantages to greater competition in this area. (Irvine and Granville, 2009)

3.1.6 Social and Cultural Factors: Consumer behavior, preferences, and societal trends influence MTN's marketing and product development strategies. Adapting to cultural nuances is crucial for success (Hayes, J., (2014).

3.2 INTERNAL CONTEXT:

3.2.1 Organizational Culture: MTN's internal culture influences how employees work together, make decisions, and innovate. A positive culture can foster creativity and improve employee morale (Grant, 2015)).

3.2.2 Resources and Capabilities: Assessing MTN's internal resources and capabilities, such as technology infrastructure, skilled workforce, and financial strength, is crucial for understanding its competitive advantage (Hill & Hult, 2020).

3.2.3 Leadership and Management: The effectiveness of MTN's leadership and management teams is critical for setting strategic direction, decision-making, and ensuring operational efficiency (Johnson et al., 2017).\

3.2.4 Innovation and Technology: MTN's internal capacity for innovation and technology adoption influences its ability to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry (Hill & Hult, 2020).

3.2.5 AI and Strategic Analysis

Although information systems have long helped managers collect and arrange data for environmental scanning and decision-making (Robinson, Ahmad, and Simmons, 2021), artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms may be able to significantly increase the scope, scale, and speed of an organization's analysis of its internal and external environments due to their ability to interact with the environment and generate data. (Duhaime, Hitt and Lyles, 2021)

3.2.6 Financial Performance: The company's financial health, profitability, and liquidity directly impact its ability to invest in new technologies, expand services, and remain resilient in the face of economic challenges (Johnson et al., 2017).

MTN South Africa has employed competitive and development strategies aligned with contemporary strategic management principles:

3.2.7 Competitive Strategies:

- **Brand Leverage:** MTN focuses on leveraging its brand as the most trusted and valued in the industry, contributing to customer loyalty and market leadership (MTN, 2022)
- **Investments in SMMEs:** By investing in Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), MTN demonstrates a commitment to socio-economic development, fostering innovation and community impact .

- **Technological Advancement:** MTN's "Ambition 2025" strategy prioritizes technological advancement, aligning with the global trend of digital transformation for sustainable growth. (MTN.com, n.d.).

3.2.8 Development Strategies:

- **Market Research and Brand Management:** MTN South Africa emphasizes market research and brand management to align its offerings with customer expectations and strengthen its market position.
- **Global Expansion:** The company has strategies for global expansion, recognizing opportunities in growing mobile and internet markets beyond its core regions.
- **Stakeholder Management:** MTN's strategic analysis emphasizes addressing stakeholders' issues and expectations, underscoring the importance of a comprehensive approach to development.

3.2.9 Contemporary Strategic Management Issues:

- **Digital Transformation:** MTN has put a big emphasis on technological advancement in-order to align with the contemporary need for digital transformation to stay competitive.
- **Social Responsibility:** Investments in SMMEs and commitment to socio-economic development address contemporary expectations for corporate social responsibility.
- **Globalization Challenges:** Strategies for global expansion acknowledge the challenges and opportunities presented by

globalization, requiring careful consideration of diverse markets and regulatory environments.

4. EXTERNAL ANALYSIS USING MICHAEL PORTER'S FIVE FORCES

4.1 Threat of New Entrants:

MTN's established presence and significant capital requirements create high entry barriers.

4.2 Bargaining Power of Buyers:

Consumers have moderate bargaining power; however, personalized customer care can enhance loyalty.

4.3 Bargaining Power of Suppliers:

Supplier bargaining power is low due to MTN's scale and established relationships.

4.4 Threat of Substitutes:

Technological advancements pose a threat; differentiation through innovative customer care is crucial.

4.5 Intensity of Competitive Rivalry:

Intense competition with Vodacom, Orange, and Airtel requires MTN to differentiate through customer-centric strategies.

5. SWOT ANALYSIS

By applying the SWOT Analysis on MTN Utilizing frameworks from "Strategic Management: Texts and Cases" (Dess et al., 2016) and "Exploring Strategy"

(Johnson et al., 2017), the research aims to determine the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for MTN:

5.1 Strengths:

5.2 WEAKNESSES:

- Limited differentiation in customer care services.
- **Potential operational inefficiencies affecting service delivery.**
- **Dependence on Key Markets:** The reliance on South Africa and Nigeria for a significant portion of revenue exposes MTN to market-specific risks.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Telecommunications regulations and uncertainties may impact the company's operations and strategies.
- **Economic Sensitivity:** Economic downturns can affect consumer spending on telecommunication services, impacting MTN's revenue.

5.3 Opportunities:

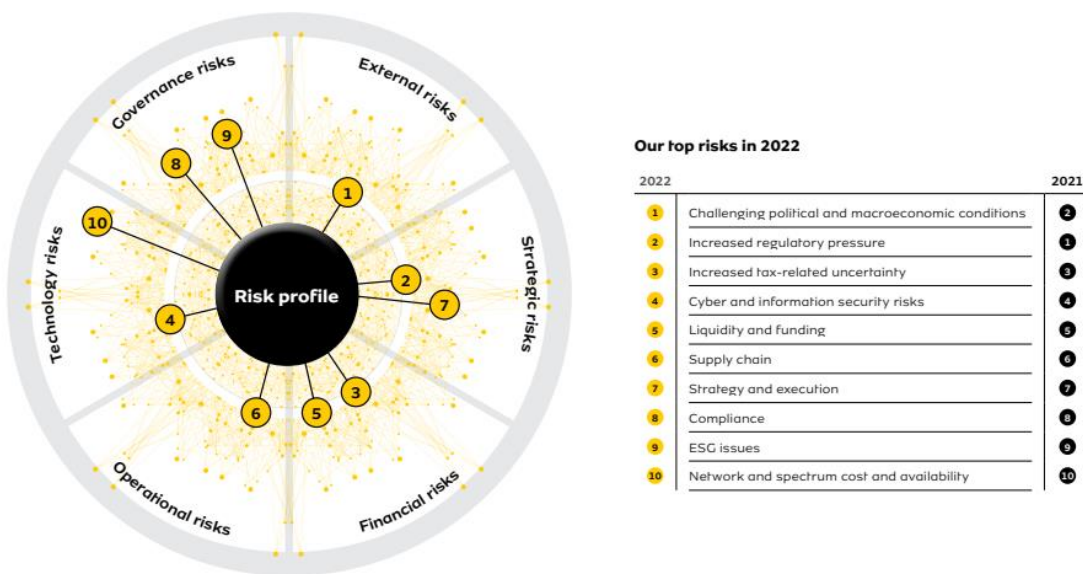
- **Technological Advancements:** Embracing emerging technologies which include Ai, faster connectivity through 5G, presents opportunities for service enhancement and innovation.
- **Expanding Mobile and Internet Markets:** Global expansion into growing mobile and internet markets can diversify revenue streams.
- **Digital Transformation:** Accelerated digital adoption due to COVID-19 opens avenues for MTN to offer innovative digital services.

5.4 Threats:

- **Intense Competition:** The telecommunications sector faces fierce competition, posing a threat to market share and pricing.
- **COVID-19 Impact:** Pandemic-related challenges, such as supply chain disruptions and economic uncertainties, can affect operations.
- **Regulatory Changes:** Unforeseen changes in telecommunications regulations may require adjustments to business strategies.

5.5 Fig 1.2 – MTN's Top Risks in 2022. Source: MTN Integrated Report 2022

Top risks to value creation



6. PESTLE ANALYSIS: MTN SOUTH AFRICA

6.1 Political Factors:

When analyzing the political factors for MTN South Africa, it's essential to consider the influence of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC has been the dominant political force in South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Mosala, Venter and Bain, 2017). The party's policies, decisions, and governance style can significantly impact the business environment, particularly in regulated industries like telecommunications.

6.1.1 Political Environment: Political stability and government policies in South Africa are impacting the telecommunications sector through policies and regulations such as access to spectrum and operator licences.

6.1.2 Regulatory Environment: Changes in regulations, licensing requirements has an impact on MTN's operations (ICASA, 2023).

6.2 Economic Factors:

6.2.1 Economic Growth: The overall economic health of South Africa influences consumer spending on telecommunications services. Economic downturns may affect MTN's revenue (SARB, 2022).

6.2.2 Currency Exchange Rates: As a multinational company, fluctuations in exchange rates can impact MTN's financial performance, affecting costs and revenues (SARB, 2022).

6.2.3 Impact of loadshedding: State-owned power utility Eskom continues to implement staggered power cuts in various stages in an effort to maintain the national electricity grid, with data from loadshedding tracking application EskomSePush showing that the planned power cuts were implemented on a total of 43 days, or 1 029 hours, during 2023, as at February 13. In 2022, loadshedding increased significantly to 157 days, or 3 776 hours, after recording 48 days, or 1 153 hours, in 2021, following a progressive increase from six days, or 41 hours, in 2018, 22 days, or 534 hours, in 2019, and 35 days, or 844 hours, in 2020. The ongoing loadshedding is significantly hampering the telecommunications companies' ability to provide consistent, reliable communications services. (Odendaal, n.d.). When there are power-cuts, telecommunications companies have to resort to using batteries and other backup power and this results in additional operating costs which subsequently result in telcos increasing prices of their products and services.

6.3 Social Factors:

6.3.1 Consumer Behavior: Understanding social trends and consumer preferences is crucial for MTN's marketing strategies and service offerings. Social media trends, lifestyle changes, and demographics play a role (Social Trends Reports, Consumer Behavior Studies).

6.3.2 Cultural Adaptation: Adapting services to align with cultural values and preferences is vital for success (Department of Environmental Affairs).

6.4 Technological Factors:

6.4.1 Infrastructure Development: The level of technological infrastructure in South Africa influences MTN's ability to provide advanced services. The deployment of technologies like 5G impacts competitiveness (ICASA, 2021).

6.4.2 Trends in Innovation: Staying abreast of technological advancements and fostering innovation is critical in the fast-evolving telecommunications industry (MyBroadband, 2020).

6.5 Environmental Factors:

6.5.1 Green Initiatives: Increasing emphasis on environmental sustainability may influence MTN's strategies, such as adopting green technologies and sustainable practices (MTN, 2022).

6.6 Legal Factors:

6.6.1 Telecom Regulations: Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), is the Telecommunications Regulator in South Africa and it governs and ensures compliance with telecommunications laws, data protection, and other legal requirements within the republic. Changes in legal frameworks can impact MTN's business operations (ICASA, 2017).

6.6.2 Competition Laws: Adherence to competition laws and regulations is crucial in the competitive telecom sector (Compcon, 2021).

7. Critical Evaluation of Strategic Options for Personalized Customer Care

7.1 Innovative Digital Solutions:

7.1.1. Implement innovative digital solutions to streamline customer interactions. This includes; utilizing AI-powered chatbots and self-service platforms to enhance customer experience.

7.1.2. Implement AI-driven predictive analytics for personalized customer interactions. According to Ferràs-Hernández, Tarrats-Pons, and Arimany-Serrat (2017), artificial intelligence (AI) can help with the following specific tasks: (a) gathering information from internal and external data sources on a discrete or continuous basis; (b) analyzing and interpreting such data through pattern identification; and (c) using predictive analysis to support executives in making decisions.

7.1.3. Leverage technology to gather customer data for proactive issue resolution.

7.1 Personalized Services:

7.2.1. Implementing personalized services by leveraging customer data analytics. MTN has a subscriber base of over 20million in South Africa and through the RICA process which is used to capture customers' personal information when they signup for a new simcard, this allows MTN to collect critical data such as usage, personal preferences, preferred subscriptions and then use this data to provide more personalised services and products.

7.2.2. Provide tailored offerings based on customer preferences to enhance satisfaction and loyalty. Tailored offerings through loyalty rewards programme. In 2020, MTN introduced the MTN Loyalty Programme under the name Yellobucks (MTN, 2023). The programme offers customers loyalty points and rewards through the YelloBucks currency. Customers earn YelloBucks as rewards for purchases made through the MTN app. Once customers accumulate enough YelloBucks, they can redeem them for various benefits and discounts. This initiative aims to enhance customer loyalty and engagement by providing tangible rewards for their interactions with MTN services (TechFinancials).

7.2 Employee Training and Cultural Transformation:

7.2.1 Investing in continuous training programs for employees to enhance customer service skills.

At the heart of this transformative strategy is SiYa, an internally launched employee AI-driven chatbot. SiYa opens up employee-company interactions. It's designed to offer immediate, contextually relevant support to employees, enhancing their experiences and reducing the friction often associated with traditional interactions. (Bizcommunity. n.d.).

7.3 Foster a customer-centric culture throughout the organization.

7.4 Operational Excellence and Agility:

7.4.1 Streamlining internal processes to improve efficiency in resolving customer issues. This

7.4.2 MTN will need to Adopt Agile methodologies for quick responsiveness to customer needs.

I will apply the Ansoff's Growth Matrix technique to perform an analysis on MTN's potential areas of growth.

The **Matrix** outlines four possible avenues for **growth**, which vary in risk: Market Penetration (, Product **Development**. Market **Development**. Diversification

8. Ansoff's Growth Matrix

8.1 Market Penetration: MTN can increase its market share in the existing South African telecommunications market by attracting more customers to through offering value added services and products that are not offered by its competitors. This might involve aggressive marketing campaigns or loyalty programs. This strategy will require strengthening relationships with existing customers by introducing personalized service plans based on usage patterns. This can be done through utilizing customer data analytics to understand individual preferences, enabling targeted promotions and customized offerings

8.2 Market Development: Exploring new customer segments or geographical areas within South Africa. This could involve targeting underserved regions or demographics with tailored services. By investing in its network infrastructure to rollout faster broadband technology such as 5G in the rural and remote areas will open up opportunities to tap into new markets.

8.3 Product Development: Introducing new services or products in the existing market. For MTN, this might involve launching innovative telecom services or diversifying into related sectors like digital services.

8.4 Diversification: Exploring entirely new markets or industries. MTN could consider diversifying into technology-related sectors or expanding into adjacent markets, both geographically and in terms of services.

9. Increasing Customer care in a post pandemic world

Strategic thinking embraces the past, present and future. Understanding patterns and lessons from the past will certainly inform the future – but given

the dynamic, turbulent and uncertain business environments that affect many industries and organizations, it would be dangerous to assume that the future will reflect the past and be a continuation of either past or existing trends, (Thompson and Martin, 2010).

10.IMPACT ON STRATEGY:

10.1 Strategic Alignment: MTN will need to align its strategies with external factors, such as regulatory requirements set by ICASA and Competition Commission. MTN will also need to align its strategies with technological advancements, to remain compliant and competitive (Hill & Hult, 2020).

10.2 Risk Management: Understanding external risks, like economic downturns or regulatory shifts, allows MTN to implement risk mitigation strategies in its business plans (Johnson et al., 2017).

10.3 Customer-Centric Approach: Insights into social and cultural factors help MTN tailor its products and services to meet customer expectations, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hill & Hult, 2020).

10.4 Operational Efficiency: Leveraging internal capabilities and resources enables MTN to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve overall business performance (Johnson et al., 2017).

10.5 Innovation and Adaptation: Keeping abreast of technological trends in both the external and internal contexts is crucial for MTN to innovate, adapt its services, and maintain a competitive edge (Hill & Hult, 2020).

11. CONCLUSIONS

The strategic analysis highlights the need for MTN to enhance its customer care strategy through innovation and personalization. Addressing internal weaknesses and leveraging strengths can position MTN for sustained competitiveness and resilience. The conclusions stress the importance of adapting to the evolving business landscape and outpacing competitors in the dynamic telecommunications sector.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having conducted the analysis using various techniques, I will provide my recommendation by analysing the Suitability, **Acceptability**, and **Feasibility**.

Suitability is concerned with assessing which proposed strategies address the key opportunities and threats an organisation faces through an understanding of the strategic position of an organisation: it is therefore concerned with the overall rationale of a strategy. It involves assessing the extent to which a proposed strategy: exploits the opportunities in the environment and avoids the threats ;capitalises on the organisation's strengths and avoids or remedies the weaknesses. **Acceptability** asks whether a strategy meets the expectations of stakeholders. And **feasibility** invites an explicit consideration of whether a strategy could work in practice. (Johnson, Gerry, 2017)

Taking this approach and applying it to MTN, the below are my recommendations;

1. Integrated Technological Solutions:

- Implementing AI-driven chatbots and predictive analytics for personalized customer interactions this fits both suitability and feasibility of the approach.

- Leverage technology to gather customer data for proactive issue resolution.

2. Employee Training and Cultural Transformation:

- Invest in continuous training programs for employees to enhance customer service skills.
- Foster a customer-centric culture throughout the organization.

3. Operational Agility:

All organizations survive by successfully adapting to changes in the business environment (W Edward Stead, 2014).

In-order to be more efficient in serving customers, MTN would need to streamline internal processes to improve efficiency in resolving customer issues.

Adopt Agile methodologies for quick responsiveness to customer needs.

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14. Appendices

14.1 APPENDIX 1: Background of MTN

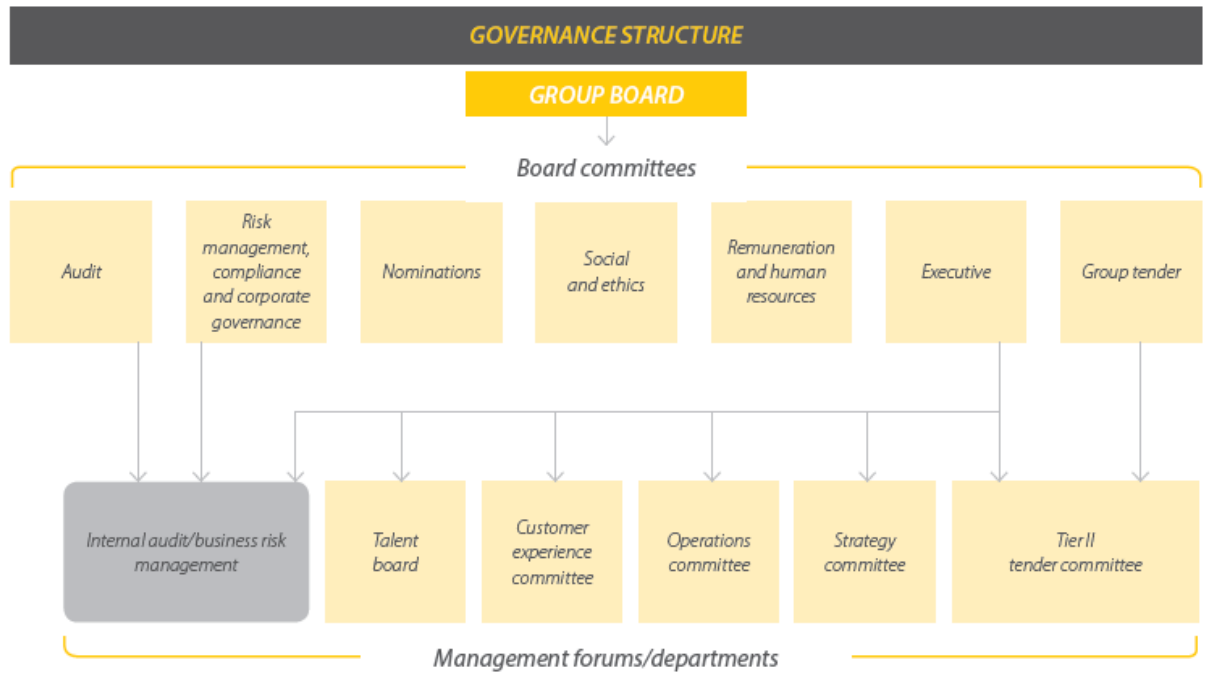
- MTN Group, a multinational telecommunications company, was established in 1994 and is headquartered in South Africa. With a market capitalization of 4.8 billion dollars, MTN operates in multiple countries, making it one of the leading telecommunication service providers globally. Employing over 18 thousand individuals, the company has played a crucial role in the African telecommunications sector.

In its early years, MTN operated its African subsidiaries as separate entities with distinct marketing strategies. However, strategic shifts were observed post-2003 as the company adopted a unified vision and brand approach across its operations in Africa.

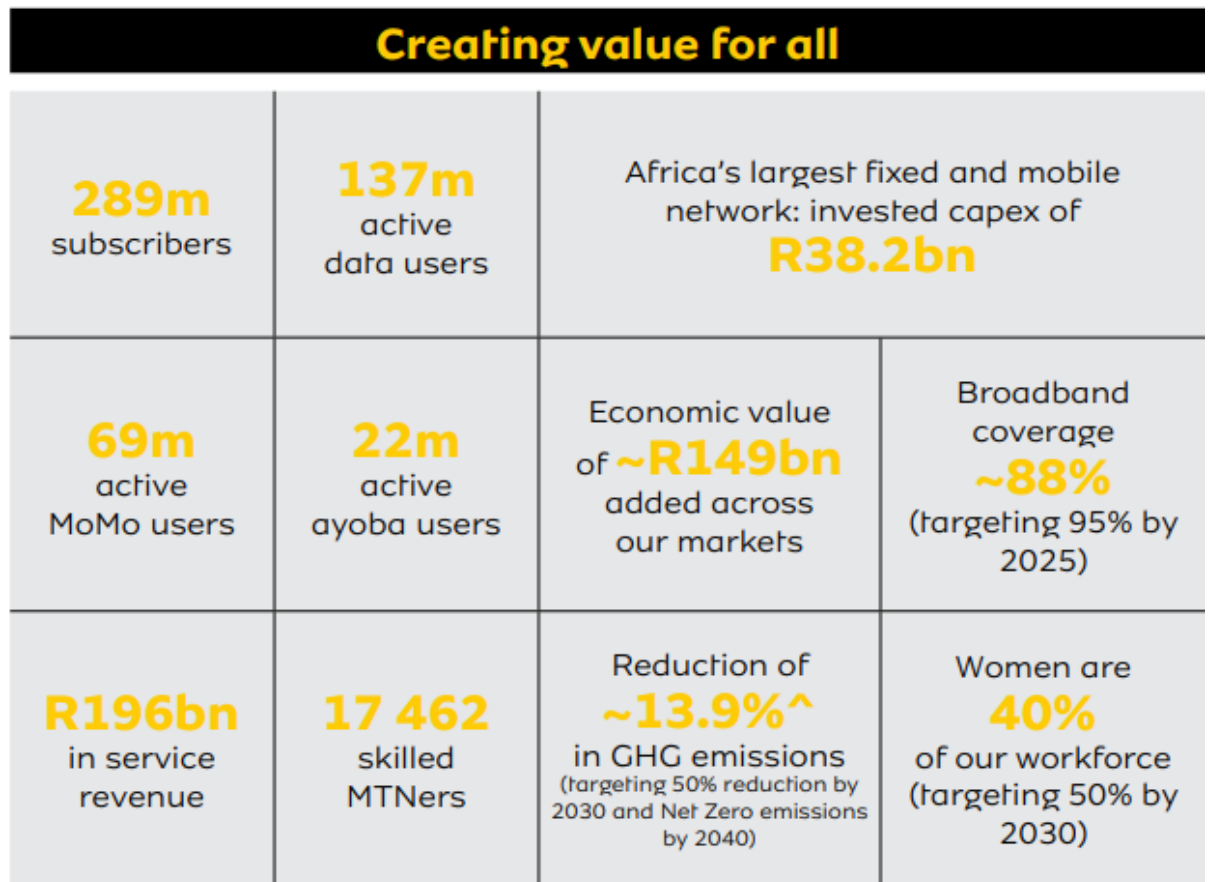
To navigate the competitive landscape, MTN has explored strategic partnerships to enhance its position as the most trusted and valued brand in Africa. Additionally, the company has emphasized effective cost management to sustain its growth and impact in the telecommunications industry.

Organizational structure

The Exco facilitates the effective control of the Group's operational activities in terms of its delegated authority approved by the Board. It is responsible for recommendations to the Board on the Group's policies and strategy and for monitoring its implementation in line with the Board's mandate. It meets at least monthly, and more often as required. The company is headed by Ralph Mupita Group President and Chief Executive Officer (MTN.com)

14.2 Fig 2.0**Subscriber Numbers**

14.3 Fig 3.0 - Subscriber Numbers. Source: MTN Annual Report 2022



14.4 Fig 4.0 Financial highlights. Source: MTN Five Year Financial Review

