

Analysis of Customer Satisfaction by Perceived Leadership Practices And Front-line Staff Performance in Selected Public Sector Agencies In Central Manchester: A Multivariate Approach

Sandra Tomlinson and Risper Akelo Awuor

Abstract

This quantitative research study was designed to investigate customers' perceptions of leadership practices and front-line staff performance on their satisfaction in selected public sector agencies in central Manchester. The participants involved in the study were customers of two selected public sector agencies. The main instrument for the data collection was a four-point Likert Scale questionnaire that was administered to conveniently selected ninety six public sector customers. A multiple regression analysis was employed to analyse the data. The findings from the study revealed that there a statistically significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service worker performance.

Key words: Customers, customer satisfaction, leadership, customer perception

Introduction

Quality customer service is of paramount importance for the survival of business ventures in the twenty-first century globally. Jamaican businesses are not exempted or immune to this construct. The evolution of technology, international business and global travel has revolutionized the Jamaican business landscape and has set the standard by which Jamaican organizations must perform. In fact, because of these developments the Jamaican consumers are demanding greater level of customer service from the Jamaican business community whether public or private sector.

Jamaican customers today are more cognisant of and are demanding excellent service from public sector leaders and customer service employees. It is therefore imperative that leaders in the public sector be prepared to respond to the growing demands of the public by adequately preparing customer service employees to meet and exceed customers' expectations. Traditionally, our public sector was designed to facilitate the persons who work in these sectors and not the people for whom the sector was designed (Ministry Paper no. 56 September 2002). Jamaican customers, using the services offered by public sector agencies, have many and varied expectations and experiences. However, what is not clear is how effectively, leaders and customers service employees are responding to these customers. Henry (2006) posits that quality service is dependent on customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, leadership, and continuous improvement.

Background

In 1994, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, P.J. Patterson initiated the benchmarking of the United Kingdom Citizen's Charter Program in the public sector in Jamaica. This program was implemented in response to customers expressing their disgust with the service offered by officers of the government and in particular customer service workers (Tindigarukayo, 2007). Baker and Bent (1997), as cited by Tindigarukayo (2007) suggested that all public sectors are operated using the citizens' money directly or by taxes and so citizens expect high quality service that is efficient and affordable.

There is a concern by many customers that they are not experiencing high quality customer service at many public sector agencies in Jamaica. Sinclair-McCalla (2011) stated that the government of Jamaica is

aware of the perception that public officers are not facilitating the delivery of excellent customer service to the public.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if perceived leadership practices and the performance of frontline staff, impact customer satisfaction among a randomly selected sample of public sector customers.

The study also examined if perceived customer satisfaction and perceived leadership practices varied by gender. The findings from the study as well as recommendations could allow leadership within the public sector in Jamaica to improve the quality of customer service offered to the public. Thus ensuring that the quality of customer service delivered is of the highest possible standard. This study may also prove significant for customers as they could see remarkable improvement in the quality of service they receive from public sector agencies.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between leadership practices and customers' satisfaction as perceived by customers in selected public sector agencies in Jamaica?
2. What is the relationship between frontline staff performance and customers' satisfaction as perceived by customers in selected public sector agencies in Jamaica?
3. Which predictor variable accounts more for customers' satisfaction in the public sector in Jamaica?

Literature Review

Leadership Definitions

There are multiple definitions for leadership, Alan Keith states that leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Covey (2004), on the other hand defines leadership as "communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves" (p.98). Another definition of leadership is provided by Harris (2000, p. 120) whereby it "is the ability to influence others".

It was noted by Harris (2007) that leadership is more than having a title as it involves the development of the skills and practice needed to lead. Unless leaders in the public sector buy into the philosophy of excellent customer service, the organization will not create excellent customer service. The leader's philosophy must be communicated to workers so that they can make rational decisions that will enhance customers' experiences.

Leadership Practices

Based on an analysis of various leadership experiences Kouzes and Posner (2007) postulate five practices of exemplary leadership. These are: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable others to Act and encourage the Heart.

Customer Service

Harris (2000) states that "customer service is anything we do for the customer that enhances the customer experience" (p.2). The essence of customer service is "concerned with looking after customers to ensure that their wants, needs, and expectations are met or exceeded, thus creating customer satisfaction" (Henry, 2003, p.1). Henry further posits that quality customer service is "meeting and exceeding customer expectations every time" (p.3).

Customers

A customer may be defined as "someone who depends on the timeliness, quality and accuracy of someone else's work" (Henry, 2003, p. 18). Timm (2001) defines a customer as "any person with whom we exchange value" (p.2), he further postulates that there are different names for customers, based on the nature of the business or organization. The name that customers are referred to as is based on the type of transaction that they do with an organization or business. For the purpose of this study customers are, clients, and users, who engage in some form of transaction with selected public sector agencies in Jamaica.

Customer satisfaction and Quality

Satisfaction as defined by Harris (2007) “is the overall feeling of contentment with a customer interaction. Customer satisfaction recognizes the difference between customer expectations and customer perceptions” (p.2). Customers’ satisfaction is often established quickly or developed sometimes over time.

According to Douglas and Connor (2003) “The consumer who has developed a heightened perception of quality has become more demanding and less tolerant of assumed shortfalls in service.” (p. 1). Many researchers have stated that there is a strong relation between satisfaction and quality. The concepts are many times referred to as doppelgängers. However, many academics emphasize that the concepts can be used interchangeably (Granroos, 1982, Boulding et al., 1993; Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Jamali 2005). Satisfaction and quality are based on expectation, perception, experiences and evaluation of the service.

Methodology

Participants for the study on how perceived leadership practices and the performance of frontline staff, impact customer satisfaction were randomly selected from public sector customers. Sampling was used to obtain a sample of ninety six (96) drawn from the public sector customers’ in Central Manchester. The data collected was analysed using multiple regression analysis procedure to determine the relationship between customers’ satisfaction and perceived leadership practices and customer service workers performance. All ethical guidelines for the research process, particularly caring for data were adhered to.

Data Analysis

The resulting output for the regression to predict customer satisfaction from leadership practices and customer service workers performance are represented by the tables below.

Table 1.

Correlations				
		NewCRS1	NewCRM2	NewC3
NewCRS1	Pearson Correlation	1	.617**	.405**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	96	96	96
NewCRM2	Pearson Correlation	.617**	1	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	96	96	96
NewC3	Pearson Correlation	.405**	.362**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	96	96	96

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient presented in Table 1 shows a statistically significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service worker performance ($r = 0.41$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$) and customer satisfaction and leadership practices ($r = 0.36$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$).

Table 2.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.429 ^a	.184	.167	.65262

a. Predictors: (Constant), NewCRM2, NewCRS1

The regression model indicates that 18% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction is accounted for by Leadership practices and customer service. As indicated in the ANOVA Table below The model is statistically significant, $F_{(2,93)} = 10.50$; $p=.0001 < .05$.

A value of 0.43 indicates that customer service managers' practices and customer service workers performance are good predictors of customer satisfaction. The R^2 (coefficient of determination) value of portion of the dependent variable explained by the dependent variable. In this model R^2 is 0.184 that is the independent variables, customer service mangers practice and customer service workers performance explains 18% of the variability of the dependent variable customer satisfaction.

Table 3. ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.941	2	4.470	10.496	.000 ^b
	Residual	39.610	93	.426		
	Total	48.551	95			

a. Dependent Variable: NewC3

b. Predictors: (Constant), NewCRM2, NewCRS1

Table 4.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.386	.302		4.589	.000
	NewCRS1	.243	.099	.293	2.466	.016
	NewCRM2	.208	.137	.181	1.518	.132

. Dependent Variable: NewC3

The standardized coefficient, β , for customer service worker performance is 0.293. (See **Coefficients** table 4). This means that for each unit of customer service workers' performance there is an increase/increment of 0.29 in customer satisfaction. The increment is statistically significant at 0.01 level.

Discussion

Customer service relationship has gained significant attention in Jamaica in recent years due to the fact that the relationship between customers and service workers and leaders ultimately determines the success or failure of business. Based on the findings, there is a statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service worker performance in the public sector in Central Manchester, Jamaica. However the data has shown that there is no statistically significant relationship between leadership practices and customer satisfaction in Central Manchester. This could be as a result of the fact that leaders do not necessarily have day to day contact with customers of the selected public sector agencies. The variables customer service workers performance and leadership practice are good predictors of customer satisfaction.

However, workers performance accounted for more customer satisfaction than the variable leadership practice.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on the relationship between customers' satisfactions by perceived leadership practices and customer service workers performance in Central Manchester. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service workers performance. The findings will assist public sector organization to place more emphasis on the training of customer service workers. The theoretical context suggested that leadership practices and customer service worker performance is related to customer satisfaction in the public sector. However, the results did not show a statistically significant relationship between leadership practices and customer satisfaction in this study. The findings therefore provide the base for further studies. The study did not include all possible factors that could impact customer satisfaction in the public sector the researcher is therefore recommending that further studies be done to investigate other variables that can influence customer satisfaction in the public sector in Jamaica. A qualitative orientation could be employed to discern managers' perception of the performance of employees in the public sector. The literature demarcated the relationship between customer satisfactions in relation to leadership practices. The literature available on customer satisfaction been impacted by leadership practices and worker performance led to the purpose of this research.

References

Baker, J. R. & Bent. D. (1997). Customers service: Charters and their role in improving public sector service delivery in the UK and Australia.

Boulding, B., Kalra, A., Staelin, R., & Zeithaml, V. (1993). A dynamic process model of service quality: from expectations to behavioral intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 7-27.

Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 8th habit: from effectiveness to greatness*. USA: Free Press.

Douglas, L. & Connor, R. (2003). Attitudes to service quality – the expectation gap. *Nutrition & Food Science*, 33(3), 165-172.

Government of Jamaica. (2002). *Public sector modernisation vision and strategy*. Ministry paper no. 56. Retrieved from <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/carica...>

Gronroos, C. (1982). Strategic Management and Marketing. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Harris, E. K. (2000). *Customer Service – A Practical Approach* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Henry, B. (2006). *Strategies for creating a service culture*. Retrieved from http://csajonline.com/service_culture.htm

Jamali, D. (2005). A study of customer satisfaction in the context of a public private partnership. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 24(4), 370-385.

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The Leadership challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rust, R. & Zahorik, A. (1993). Customer satisfaction, customer retention, and market share. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(2), 193-215.

Sinclair-McCalla, P. (2011). Reducing bureaucracy- a vision for Government customer service. Retrieved from www.icac.org.jm/.../Reducing%20Bureaucracy%20-...

Timm, P. (2001). *Customer service: career success through customer satisfaction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Tindigarukayo, J. (2007). Benchmarking the citizen's charter in Jamaica: An empirical evaluation. *Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference Crisis, Chaos and Change: Caribbean Development Challenges in the 21st century*. Trinidad and Tobago, March 26-28, 2007.

About the Authors

Dr Sandra Tomlinson works at Northern Caribbean University, Jamaica.

Dr Risper Akelo Awuor is the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of Asia-Pacific International University, Thailand.