



REVISITING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ITS IMPLICATION ON CONSISTENT AND SATISFACTORY SERVICE DELIVERY

Amos Ojo Adedeji *1

¹Peace and Development Studies, Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria

DOI:10.58330/jmarks.v2i1.141

Accepted: 21 January 2023. Approved: 01 Maret 2023. Published: 01 Maret 2023.

ABSTRACT

Customer relation is one of the most important aspect of business as well as most neglected in the past. With the current waves of development and competition across the companies, it has become household discussion and major researched among other aspect of means of business growth. The paper qualitatively examine the excellent customer service and its implication on consistent and satisfactory service delivery. The study found that consistent excellent customer service delivery leads to high level of productivity, improvement in team work, effective communication, and increase customer satisfaction among others. The work also identified lack of commitment and indifference, poor team work, inconvenient access to support and poor salary scale for staff of service provider among others as barriers to an excellent customer service. The paper concluded by recommending amongst availability of dedicated staff to handle customer issue, strong team work, easy access to support and upgrading of staff remuneration for effective and excellent customer service.

Review Paper

J-MARKS (Jurnal Manajemen Risiko dan Keuangan Syariah)

Keywords: Company, Customer Service, Employee, Organisation, Service Delivery.

INTRODUCTION

A successful business depends on good company operations. It calls for a synthesis of expertise and abilities from various fields and pertinent departments across sectors, especially those involved in front-line customer service. An essential component of the company's product and the services it strives to offer is interaction between staff and customers (Nickson et al. 2005). Customers' attitudes toward quality, and to a considerable part, how they regard the company's product, are influenced by the conduct and skills of the personnel with whom they come into contact (Farrell et al. 2001). According to Kurtenbach (2000), people that excel at providing excellent customer service place a high value on the satisfaction of their clients.

It is the responsibility of employees to interact with consumers in a way that embodies the image that the company wants

to project. Interactions reveal fragility and a variety of potential points of friction and compromise, from which service failure can readily happen if not controlled appropriately. The labor-intensive nature of service contacts, which call for employee collaboration and teamwork, adds to the heterogeneous nature of customer service. As Simons (1995) states: Organisations are multifaceted, social systems, and collections of individuals bound together to meet personal and social needs. Group norms and patterns of power and influence affect internal decision processes. Organisations are also sets of relationships among self-interested participants, each of whom is balancing personal well-being and organisational needs.

Management anticipates that a constant degree and style of customer service will be maintained despite the complexity, variability, fragility, and labor intensity of

* Correspondence Address

E-mail: amos_peace61@yahoo.com

service contacts. In order to manage groups of self-interested people, management must ensure that employee behavior and the organization's goals are aligned (Yagil, 2002). Customers also want a distinctive experience, and they anticipate having their particular demands addressed. According to Ettore (2001), gathering information about present customers may and should be done to learn more about how they feel about the services being offered. The main objective of the paper is to critically interrogate the implication of excellent customer service on consistent and satisfactory service delivery.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The work adopts the historical method which is descriptive in nature. The work utilized content analysis using mainly secondary data as its sources. The data include existing literature on the topic such as books; journals; conference papers; and other related publications on the subject of customer relation. The study adopted thematic analysis to analyse the data in line with the historical method. The topic of the study is a reflection of the complex nature of human interactions. It therefore draws insights from the approaches of related disciplines that have explored the subject of customer relation in an establishment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Analysis

The word "custom" refers to a habit, whereas "client" refers to a person who frequently patronises a business to buy its goods or services, making it their habit to do so. Customers are best characterized as the people who use the results of work or as the final consumers of goods or services (Dei-Tumi, 2005). They may be from within the organization; the staff and directors or from outside; the general public, other enterprises, or the government. A person who purchases goods or services from a service provider is referred to as a customer. It might also apply to any prospective customer. They are not a disruption of the job; they are the reason the client has a job. As more customers participate, things become clearer and easier to determine (Dei-Tumi, 2005). The term "services" refers to immaterial operations that

provide customers with a market. A company's "core offerings" include both "physical things" (such as furniture, a refrigerator, and sugar) and "intangible services," both of which call for traditional marketing efforts that prioritise pricing and promotion.

However, regardless of whether the core offering is a tangible product or an intangible service, a service is a basic or essential concept that supports the core offering. In this context, "basic customer service" is described as a complimentary service offered to customers along with the primary product or service. Getting and keeping customers is one of the biggest problems for every business. It is crucial to pinpoint the variables that provide difficulties since, if ignored, they would undermine marketing efforts. One of these criteria is customer service. Anything done for the client that improves their experience is referred to as customer service (Harris, 2000). Customer service is hence the supply of services to clients prior to, during, and after a purchase.

It is referred to as a helping act in the Oxford Dictionary. According to MDHS, customer service refers to how customers feel they are treated, how well a company responds to their requirements, and how much it values its employees' contributions to a project's success. Customers generally have certain basic needs that customer service representative have to meet. They require timely service; complete, clear, and accurate information; and support for their efforts.

Types of Customer

There are various types of customer as highlighted by various author. The following are discussed in line with the objective of the paper:

1. **External Customers:** Customers who purchase goods or services from a company or organization but are not employees of that company or organization are known as external customers. They are what make a company or group of people exist. The purpose of the company or organization is to satisfy customers. Customers are not there to serve the company; rather, the company serves the customers.

2. **Internal Customers:** These are the generality of the staff of an organisation from one department to the **other**. They are the image maker of the organisation or company. It includes both the skill and unskilled workers of the company. It ranges from General Manager to the Cleaner or messenger. Summarily, it is the work force of the company. Internal customer relations plays a fundamental role in ensuring that external consumer relations is possible.
3. **Good Customer Service:** In attempts to providing good customer service, it's important to remember that customers have a natural expectation that they will be treated politely, kindly, and respectfully. It involves making sure the customer is getting the right product or service, giving them great attention, timely delivery of the product, and assisting them in resolving their problems.
4. **Superior Customer Service:** Superior customer service is going above and beyond to satisfy the customer. This covers everything mentioned above in addition to going above and beyond the client's demands or expectations. When a consumer receives poor customer service, they are more likely to tell others about it than when they receive excellent customer service. In order to avoid the bad reputation and reaction, it is crucial for businesses to go above and above and strive for great customer service.

Essentials Elements of Excellent Customer Service

Quality is an ideal, however excellent customer service must meet certain standard to achieve the goal of been excellent. This section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the professional qualities of customer services while the second parts outlines three elements of excellent customer service.

Professional Qualities in Customer Service

Experts who constantly deal with both internal and external customers need to strive for certain qualities. The professional qualities always relate to what the customer wants. Previous research showed that customers are

constantly internalising their customer service experience, which means that customer service is been grading during each transaction but service provider rarely know. While there are a multitude of customer needs from customer relation officer, five basics needs stand out which are:

1. **Friendship:** A service provider should be considerate and courteous.
2. **Empathy:** The client must feel that the service provider understands their needs and predicaments.
3. **Fairness:** Customers want to feel as though they are given sufficient attention and logical responses.
4. **Control:** The consumer wants to feel that his or her preferences and input have an impact on how the service will turn out.
5. **Information:** Information is essential for customers to make informed decisions about purchasing goods and services. Information regarding their product or service is equally crucial for customer support representatives. Thus, he need to be empowered to satisfy customers. Feedback from customers, managers and supervisors are necessity for the success of service provider.

In addition, the following are the three key elements of excellent customer service:

1. **Expansion of Service Definition:** Service definition shapes every interaction service provider have with customers. Limited definitions of service misses the overall point of customer service. Service should be rendered to a customer directly rather than third party. It should therefore provide satisfaction. A happy customer is a buying and a returning customer.
2. **Accurate Definition of Customers:** Customer service is most often defined by how a business or organization interacts with its externals. Coworkers must be added to the notion of customer service in order to achieve even greater success. Due to the internal chain's similarity to the exterior chain, both are customers. The ability to listen to the customer and kindly ask for his requirements or wants is the first step in providing excellent customer service. The service provider must get to know his client, including his likes and

dislikes, opinions, and background. Understanding what drives the consumer is essential for effective customer service.

3. **Develop a Customer Friendly Approach:** The creation of a system and an attitude that supports customer-friendly service is one thing that unites all businesses or organizations that offer goods and services. The most significant aspect of the task must be the customer. The customer-friendly environment is the source of the proverb "The customer is always right." The two key components of effective customer interactions are connection building and communication. Developing relationships with clients and having positive communication with them are possibly the two most crucial aspects of providing excellent customer service.

Customer Service Skills and Competencies

There is some disagreement regarding the definitions and traits of words used to define the skills necessary to offer customer service. It's possible that Spencer and Spencer's (1993) classification of the knowledge, abilities, and skills needed for customer service work is the clearest. Competency is defined as individual underlying characteristics. Further, competency can be divided into five characteristics which are skills, knowledge, self-concept, traits and motives. The idea is that knowledge and skills are more easily acquired through training and are considered to be surface-level traits that are comparatively obvious to others. Self-concept, qualities, and motivations are more important to a person's personality than outward or covert attributes, and as a result, they are more challenging to cultivate (Cran, 1994; Spencer and Spencer, 1993). For purpose of clarity, the following are the most useful skills of customer service in the field of business development:

1. **Friendly Reactions:** In any circumstance, customers value a personal, friendly, and professional exchange that gives a sense of individualized attention.
2. **Knowledge of the Product or Service:** Although some consumers may already have a basic understanding of the good or service they are interested in, they frequently require the service provider to provide more in-depth details.
3. **Helpfulness:** Customer service representatives need to develop the ability to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to assist customers and exceed their expectations.
4. **Personal Connection:** Customer relation must learn how to establish a personal connection with company's clients. People prefer dealing with people rather than a faceless corporation or machine.
5. **Smiling:** A kind face and a grin go a long way when greeting a customer, especially when they are complaining. An unhappy consumer can be instantly comforted with a smile and courteous discourse. Most of the time, a calm or pleasing facial expression is desirable.
6. **Attentiveness:** Accurate attention is needed when listening to a customer, positive nodding of head to indicate rapt attention of the service provider.
7. **Hand Gestures:** Customer service relation officer should try as much as possible to emphasize the messages and the feelings.
8. **Personal Space:** Personal space is the space between people that feels comfortable to them. Customers must feel safe and unintimidated by the service provider by maintaining a sufficient distance between them.
9. **Empartise:** This is a powerful skill, service provider should try to put himself in the shoe of the customer. There is need to mirror in the best way to create quick rapport. Customer service officer should demonstrate through his action to the customers that he understand their problems. The need to feel heard is very apt.

In the literature of Mississippi's Customer Service, the acronym LAST was used as prominent customer service skill:

1. L: Listen: One of the most crucial and undervalued abilities is listening. Hearing what someone is saying is one thing. Another is to actually listen. Accurate information is the result of attentive listening.

2. A: Apologise: It's hard to apologize especially when one is not at fault. However, an apology might encourage consumers who may be upset or furious to work out their differences amicably.
3. S: Solve: By collaborating with the client, the service provider should discover how to address the issue. It's crucial to show that the service provider is willing to collaborate with the client to address the problems that have been discovered.
4. T: Thank: Customers should have the impression that the solution to their problem and the shared experience of the service provider warrant it.

Bernthal and Davis (1998) also highlights the following as part of the customer service skills to be excellent in their service:

1. **Communication:** Clear expression either verbal or written is needed. Customers need to be informed.
2. **Energy:** Service provider should always appear alert and attentive to meet the need of the customer.
3. **Follow-Up:** Customer service officer must fulfills promises and commitments in a timely and responsive manner.
4. **Initiative:** Action that meets or exceeds customer needs must be taken.
5. **Job Knowledge:** Service provider must understand organization and customers' policies and procedures.
6. **Judgment:** Customer relation officer need to develop effective approaches using available information to make accurate judgment.
7. **Persuasiveness/Sales Ability:** Gaining of customers and acceptance of ideas, products, and services is a necessity for excellent customer relation officer to effectively deliver.
8. **Planning:** He must organize work and prepares for customer interactions.
9. **Resilience:** He also should be versatile in handle problems, unpredictable events, and other job pressures while serving customers.
10. **Work Standards:** High standards for customer service should be maintained by the service provider.

To successfully execute customer service encounters, a variety of skills are needed. However, there was universal agreement in the service literature that self-efficacy and internal locus of control, as well as neat appearance, promptness, punctuality, friendliness, and empathy, are important strategies for achieving excellent customer service. Other strategies are conscientiousness; social ability; responsiveness; pleasant communication; agreeableness; perceptiveness; consideration; and accurate communication (Spencer and Spencer, 1993; Cran, 1994).

In addition to the important strategies are social skills needed to achieve excellent customer service such as emotional stability, social responsiveness, tact, open-mindedness, the capacity to handle stress, self-confidence, speaking skills, and cheeriness. Other social skills include empathy, social competence, the ability to recognize and comprehend one's own and others' feelings and behaviors, the ability to respond correctly, knowledge of appropriate behavior, and extraversion and concern for others

Implication of Excellent Customer Service

There are some noticeable improvements in any company when customer service is properly professionally handled. Below are some of the importance when effective customer service skill is in place:

1. **High Level of Productivity:** Increasing productivity at the workplace has been one of the major effects of good customer relation. Excellent customer service will invariably increases the demand which will give birth to increase in the production to meet the demand. This will definitely increases the income of the company.
2. **Improvement on Team Work:** Businesses and organizations have started to promote cooperation more frequently recently as a way to guarantee better results on assignments as well as for the supply of goods and services. The challenge can be overcome by providing excellent customer service.
3. **Effective Communication:** By making communication more effective, excellent

customer service can significantly improve a company's relationship with a particular group of customers, which can enhance production.

4. **Demonstrate an Appreciation for Customers:** The service of customer service serve as antidote to customers' problem and by solving it, it appreciates the customer indirectly of been part of the company's history of success.
5. **Increase Customer Satisfaction:** An excellent customer service does not left customers' problem unsolved, therefore customers are satisfied with the company when their needs are been met regularly.

In addition to the above benefits, excellent customer service will make the organisation to grow while both the service provider and the customer will benefit immensely from the effective customer service delivery. Some of these benefits are therefore breakdown into three categories of beneficiaries and organisation. Positive effects such as higher income (more sales and referred business), recognition, personal satisfaction and fulfillment and less stress accrue to the customers which stand as beneficiaries.

The provider of the service is the organisation representatives which is the staff that responsible for the task of attending to customer. High levels of self-awareness and self-control, better authenticity, a happier life at work and outside of it, as well as more repeat business, are all advantages of being a service provider. Other benefits include increased referrals, fewer returns, a better reputation, stronger morale, and contented workers. The company that employs the customer service provider as a staff member is known as the organization. The company conducts business with a large number of consumers. Higher employee turnover, fewer complaints, higher productivity, a better work atmosphere, higher inventory turnover, and higher profits are other advantages of excellent customer service for the company.

Barriers to An Excellent Customer Service

The way and manner a customer service relation approach a customer is extremely important. The quality of a personal interaction between the service provider and

the customer play an important role in the evaluation of the company. However, there are various barriers which impede excellent performance of customer relation officer. Few of such barriers are highlighted below:

1. **Lack of Commitment and Indifference:** This is the absence of the necessary commitment from either the customer service agent or the company as a whole to the customer challenges. It lies at the root of all other barriers to an excellent customer experience and creates a negative impression in customers (Cook, 2008). Customer's issue requires a follow up, and failure to provide it gives poor image to the customer service unit and the company as a whole.
2. **Poor Team Work:** This is lack of consistency in the service unit as a result of poor team work (Lebed, 2015). When customers are getting different level of attention form the same unit, it shows clearly that there is no cooperation among the unit. Instead of solving the identified problem, it will become more complicated. Hence customers experience are greatly diminished.
3. **Scripted or Written Communication:** Customers desire authenticity and dislike overly scripted service (Jeske et al. 2015). Many companies have resulted into written script to address customers' challenges. Companies engage in this canned responses partly because they don't trust the discretion of their employees to sort out the customer's problem or because it is easier for companies to use already made approach.
4. **Inconvenient Access to Support:** Customer often get it tough to get support when needed due to unnecessary bottleneck put in place that limit access to support. Technicality can at times make things difficult for customer, and often lead to delay response (Lebed, 2015). Delay response is one of the most frequent causes of complaint and dissatisfaction by customers.
5. **Lack of Customer Personal Data and Insufficient Use of the Data:** Inability to gather customer data and gathering it but not using it are both detrimental to how

clients view the company's service. This development makes it difficult for company to provide a personalized solution to client (Jeske et al. 2015).

6. **Poor Salary Scale for Service Provider Staff:** Customer service officers are the image maker of the company. Their work involve mental reasoning, and often dealing with some sort of emergency or urgency. The employees in this unit, however, were excessively underpaid by numerous businesses. This did not give staff to put in their best in discharging their duties (Cook 2008).

CONCLUSION

The study interrogated implication of excellent customer service on consistent and satisfactory service delivery. It noted that customer service is an integral part of business development and key to a successful business, the purpose that a business exists, and more comprehensively business is established to serve customers. The paper established that excellent customer service involve meeting of the needs of customer in a friendly, kind and respectful manner while addressing customer concern appropriately. It highlighted friendly responses, product or service knowledge, helpfulness, personal connection, attentiveness and empathy among others as the most useful skills of customer service.

The paper concluded by suggesting availability of dedicated service giver to monitor customer situation with excellent follow up; building of a strong and united team with consistent expertise in customer relation; engaging the service of trusted staff with training and re-training program with the ability to be inspired to trust in themselves and be creative; company in collaboration with service giver unit should ensure easy access to support, as customer appreciate convenience in getting support; and develop habit of gathering client data and making the most of it to provide customers superior service. Upgrading remuneration of customer service relation staff to meet up with the necessary service engage daily is also key.

Author Declarations

Author contributions and responsibilities

The authors made major contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This research did not receive external funding.

Availability of data and materials

All data is available from the author.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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