

Assessment of Customers' Satisfaction on Service Quality of Fast Food Restaurant in Akure Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Fast Food Restaurants has been identified as one of the businesses in Nigeria that continues to promise greater return on investment notwithstanding the presence of economic, social and political dilemma in the country (Mustapha, Fakokunde and Awolusi, 2014). A lot of studies have been carried out on Fast Food Restaurants from different stand point and perspectives (Ukessay, 2013; Carew, 2010; Park, 2004; Lowenstein, 1995) and each profiling different views on customer satisfaction on service quality and Nigeria is not an exception from this study. Despite several researches in Nigeria, customer satisfaction on service quality and its influence on customers' patronage to the best of my knowledge as not been focused on in Akure metropolis. This study identifies the journey so far on assessing customer satisfaction on service quality of FFRs in Akure metropolis Ondo state, Nigeria. The analysis unveils how consumers perceive service quality through SERVQUAL model that poor or low and unsatisfied services were rendered to the numerous customers by the selected FFRs management in this study area. Despite with all these poor service offered, customers are still patronizing the selected FFRs due to its location and food quality. Measuring service quality can help management provide reliable data that can be used to monitor and maintain improved service quality. In conclusion, using the SERVQUAL model to assess service quality enables management to better understand the various dimensions and how they affect service quality and customer satisfaction. This will help them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and thereby make necessary improvements.

Keywords: Nigeria, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Fast Food Restaurant

INTRODUCTION

Fast Food Restaurants has been identified as one of the businesses in Nigeria that continues to promise greater return on investment notwithstanding the presence of economic, social and political dilemma in the country (Mustapha, Fakokunde and Awolusi, 2014). According to Fakokunde, et al. 2014, "Mr. BIGGS" restaurant was the first modern Fast Food Restaurant in Nigeria, which commenced operation in 1987 by the United African Company (UAC). Ever since the introduction of Mr. BIGGS the industry has witnessed the influx of unprecedented number of fast food operators and over 100 brand names in the fast food industry have emerged while consumer

patronage of fast food has continued to increase. Examples of fast food names are; Tantalizers, Sweet Sensation, Tasty Fried Chicken, Chicken Republic, Mama Cass, Munchies, Captain Cook and many other brands. Customers are important stakeholders in every organizations and their satisfaction is a priority to management (Blumberg et al., 2005). The main key to satisfy the customers is by providing the high quality service to them. According to Kurtz (2008), customer satisfaction is vital to the restaurant management because it is normally assumed to be an important determinant of replicate sales, customer- patronage to loyalty and positive word of mouth. Service quality has been regarded a predecessor of customer satisfaction (Kim, Hertzman, and Hwanng, 2010). Customer satisfaction in services has been defined as the rate at which service performance meets or exceeds the customer's expectations (Kumar, 2012; Lombard, 2009; Santouridis and Trivellas, 2010). Hui and Zheng (2010) also defined satisfaction as an evaluative judgment of a specific transaction resulting from perceived quality.

Akure South Local Government is one of the metropolitans in Nigeria' that have numerous Fast Food Restaurant. This research was carried out amongst the FFRs in Akure Metropolis using purposive sampling to select the FFRs. This sampling technique was based on their reputation and most importantly their standards. Five outlets were selected, they include; Chicken Republic, Mr. Biggs, Tantalizer, Captain Cook and Bayduk Kentucky Fast Food. This assessment was carried out in the selected FFRs to know the extent of customer satisfaction on service quality and to ascertain if customer satisfaction on service quality is the major reason for patronage in the selected FFRs. A lot of studies have been carried out on Fast Food Restaurants from different stand point and perspectives (Ukessay, 2013; Carew, 2010; Park, 2004; Lowenstein, 1995) and each profiling different views on customer satisfaction on service quality and Nigeria is not an exception from this study. In their study customer satisfaction on service quality has been measured by different models most especially SERVQUAL model to determine customer satisfaction on service quality, customer loyalty and retention decision. Despite several researches in Nigeria, customer satisfaction on service quality and its influence on customers' patronage to the best of my knowledge as not been focused on in Akure metropolis.

Fast Food Restaurant try to introduce various strategies and promotion to maintain their market share, sales and profitability, all aimed at ensuring customer patronage of their service this means that Fast food industry has definitely not been free from either fierce competition or from increasing customer expectations regarding quality (Njoku *et al.*, 2015). Notwithstanding these strategies, a wrong or lack of knowledge about customers' perception might lead management to misallocate resources when attempting to improve service quality. Based on this reasons this research was carried out to determine the level of service quality, the extent at which customers are satisfied on the service quality of the selected FFRs and if service quality is what is influencing customer's patronage.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research will definitely contribute to the body of knowledge because it will serve as a source of reference to further researches and better the understanding of customer satisfaction on service delivery and patronage in the study area. The outcome of this

research will contribute to the fast food industry and policy makers as well as the owners and managers of the selected outlets of the study to know their customer perception and expectation about service quality and make adjustment in areas where gap exist so as to allocate resources and strategies in areas where they are dissatisfaction in order to have competitive edge in the industry, improved sales, profitability and market share in the industry within the study area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the previous studies on the research topic. It consist of three sections the conceptual, theoretical and empirical framework.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has become a key intermediary objective in service operations due to the advantage it brings to organizations (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003). According to Lin & Wu, 2011, customer satisfaction in the marketing context is a key that leads to long term customer retention because the dissatisfied customers has the choice to switch brands or a satisfied customers will probably talk to others about their good experiences this implies that customers satisfaction play a urge role in the survival of the business. Customer satisfaction is the ability of a service provider to create high rate of satisfaction crucial for product differentiation and developing strong relationship with customers (Deng *et al.*, 2009). Customer satisfaction with a service can be defined by comparing perceptions and expectations of service. When expectations are not met, service quality is deemed unacceptable and dissatisfaction occurs. When expectations are confirmed by perceived service, quality is satisfactory (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2006). Customer satisfaction is closely linked to quality. In recent years, many companies have adopted total quality management programs designed constantly to improve the quality of their products, services and marketing process. Quality has direct impact on product or service performance, and hence on customer satisfaction (Agbemabiese, Patrick and Adu 2015).

Service Quality

Service can be defined in many ways depending on which area the term is being used. Kotler and Keller, 2009 defines service as "any intangible act or performance that one party offers to another that does not result in the ownership of anything". In other words service can also be defined as an intangible offer by one party to another in exchange of money for pleasure (Jenet 2011). In service marketing literature, "service quality is generally defined as the overall assessment of a service by the customers, (Eshghi et al., 2008,) or the extent to which a service meets customer's needs or expectations". Service quality is commonly noted as a critical prerequisite and determinant of competitiveness for establishing and sustaining satisfying relationships with customers. Previous study suggests that service quality is an important indicator of customer satisfaction (Spreng and Machoy, 1996). Attention to service quality can make an organization different from other organizations and gain a lasting competitive advantage (Boshoff and Gray, 2004). Service quality has been measured by several models but this research will consider SERVQUAL model.

SERVQUAL Model

SERVQUAL was first conceptualized by Parasuraman et al. to evaluate the service quality of four types of companies- a bank, a credit card company, a repair and maintenance firm, and a phone service carrier. The SERVQUAL model developed in (1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1990) which now prevails as one of the most widely used scale. It was designed to measure the gap between customers expectation of services and their perceptions of actual service delivered. It identified 5 gaps upon which service quality could be measured respectively on the sides of the service provider. which are;

1. Gap between customer's expectation and management perception.
2. Gap between management perception and service-quality specifications
3. Gap between service quality specification and service delivery
4. Gap between service delivery and external communication.
5. Gap between perceived service and expected service.

This gaps lead to service quality dimensions which are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Service Quality versus Customer Satisfaction

Previous studies has studied customer satisfaction and service quality and found an interaction between them (Gera, 2011). According to Ting 2004, dimensions of service quality are specifically or directly connected with the rendering of the service whilst satisfaction is based on many factors, both directly and indirectly relating to the delivery of the service. For instant, Negi, (2009) stated that overall service quality is significantly associated with and contributes to the overall satisfaction of customer. Parasuraman *et al.*, (1985) contends that when perceived service quality is high, then it will lead to increase in customer satisfaction. They argue that service quality leads to customer satisfaction and this support Lee *et al.*, (2000) who acknowledge that customer satisfaction is based upon the level of service quality provided by the service provider this implies when FFRS are able to achieve or exceed the expectations of customers, the customer will be satisfied with the service. To achieve a high level of customer satisfaction, most researchers suggest that a high level of service quality should be delivered by the service provider as service quality is normally considered an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; Anderson *et al.*, 1994; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Newman (2001) also indicates that there is a connection between the quality of service and customer satisfaction. Based on this review, researcher has been able correlate the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality as two distinct concepts that are closely related.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Disconfirmation Theory

Oliver (1980) was the first to propose and developed the expectancy disconfirmation theory. Disconfirmation theory argues that 'satisfaction is related to the size and direction of the disconfirmation experience that occurs as a result of comparing service performance against expectations' This theory has been tested and confirmed in several studies (Oliver and Desarbo, 1988; Satari, 2007). Szymanski and Henard (2004) found in the meta-analysis that the disconfirmation paradigm is the best predictor of customer satisfaction. Ekinici et al (2004) cites Oliver's updated definition on the disconfirmation theory, which states "Satisfaction is the guest's fulfilment response. It is a judgment that

a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under- or over-fulfilment". Positive disconfirmation occurs when service perceived is better than expected while negative disconfirmation is when service perceived is below expectation. Customer satisfaction occurs by confirmation or positive disconfirmation of consumer expectations, and dissatisfaction is caused by negative disconfirmation of consumer expectations (Agbemabiese, Patrick and Adu 2015).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Janet (2011) in her study on The Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality: A study of three Service sectors in Umea. The research applied SERVQUAL model, it shows that customers' perceptions of service quality offered by grocery stores did not meet their expectations (all gaps scores the dimensions are negative). Dimensions that reported larger mean gaps were reliability (-1,0901), responsiveness (-1,0033) and assurance (-0,8675) while smaller mean gaps obtained were products (-0,4834), tangibles (-0,6275) and empathy (-0,6874). These values show that the perception of performance in grocery stores is less than the expected level of service quality meaning customer satisfaction is low. Ahmad Al-Tit (2005) in his work on the effect of service and food quality on customer satisfaction and hence customer retention, examined the relationships between service, food quality, customer satisfaction, customer retention in a specific type of restaurants in Jordan. The study found a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and retention.

According to Moses *et al.*, (2015) in their study on factors that influence customer patronage of Fast Food Restaurants in Anambra State Nigeria. They discovered that food quality, service quality, environment and consumer demographics are the main factors that influence the behaviour of consumers towards patronizing the Fast Food Restaurants in Anambra state. Dipeolu *et al.*, (2014) in their study on Customer Satisfaction in Fast Food Restaurants in Ibadan Metropolis, the concludes that customer satisfaction significantly enhances repurchase intention and this is closely related to the customers' perception of tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy dimensions of service quality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section is concerned with the analysis of the data collected through the use of SERVQUAL structured questionnaire answered by the customers of the selected FFRs which were distributed to the respondent to achieve the objectives of this research. One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were distributed and One hundred and forty four (144) were retrieved for analysis.

Demographic Information

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| MALE | 70 | 48.6 | 48.6 |
| FEMALE | 74 | 51.4 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 144 | 100.0 | |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

From chart 4.1.1, regarding the gender distribution of the 144 respondent, more than half of the respondents, 51.4% constituted the females, while the remaining 48.6% represents males. but it does not in any way suggest that female customers of FFRs were significantly higher than male customers.

Table 1.1: Age of Respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| 18-24YRS | 70 | 48.6 | 48.6 |
| 25-34YRS | 51 | 35.4 | 84.0 |
| 34-44YRS | 16 | 11.1 | 95.1 |
| 45-54YRS | 4 | 2.8 | 97.9 |
| 55-64YRS | 3 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 144 | 100.0 | |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

From table 4.1.1 the age distribution of the sampled customers of the selected FFR shows that 48.6 % of the respondents were within the age group of 18-24 years. This was followed by those who were 25-34 years of age, this group constituted 34.4% of the respondents, 11.1% of the respondents were 34-44 years also 2.8% falls within 45-54 age bracket while 55-64 years constituted 2.1%. The implication of the findings is that majority of the respondents were young people.

Chart 4.1.2: Work Status of the Respondent

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| SELF EMPLOYED | 45 | 31.3 | 31.3 |
| GOVERNMENT EMPLOYED | 10 | 6.9 | 38.2 |
| PRIVATE EMPLOYED | 26 | 18.1 | 56.3 |
| OTHERS | 63 | 43.8 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 144 | 100.0 | |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

The chart 4.1.2 reveals that 31.3% (45 out of 144) of the respondent of the selected FFRs are self employed, 6.9% (10 out of 144) were government employed, 18.1% (26 out of 144) were private employed while 43.8% (63 out of 144) constituted others, the others includes students, corpors and other group of work occupation apart from the three work status mentioned.

Table 1.2 Selected FFRS for the Study

| FFRs | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| CHICKEN REPUBLIC | 30 | 20.8 | 20.8 |
| CAPTIAN COOK | 28 | 19.4 | 40.3 |
| MR BIGGS | 30 | 20.8 | 61.1 |
| TANTALIZER | 26 | 18.1 | 79.2 |
| BKFC | 30 | 20.8 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 144 | 100.0 | |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

The above table 4.1.2 indicates that a total of 144 questionnaires were retrieved from the selected FFRs out of 150 copies of questionnaires, 30 questionnaires were distributed for each FFRs and only three FFRs customers returned the complete 30 and this includes Chicken Republic, Mr. Biggs, BKFC(constituting 20.8% each of the total percentage). For the customers of Captain Cook 28 questionnaires were retrieved (19.4%) while 26 questionnaires were retrieved from Tantalizer (18.1%).

Rate of Patronage of the Selected FFRs

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| EVERYDAY | 4 | 2.8 | 2.8 |
| 2-3 TIMES A WEEK | 26 | 18.1 | 20.8 |
| ONCE A WEEK | 18 | 12.5 | 33.3 |
| ONCE IN 2WEEKS | 7 | 4.9 | 38.2 |
| ONCE A MONTH | 21 | 14.6 | 52.8 |
| OCCASIONALLY | 68 | 47.2 | 100.0 |
| TOTAL | 144 | 100.0 | |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

From table 4.1.3 it indicates that 2.8% (4 out of 144) of the respondents patronize the selected FFRs everyday, 18.1% (26 out of 144) of the respondent patronize 2-3 times a week, 12.5% (18 Out of 144) patronize on a weekly basis, 4.9% (7 out of 144) patronize once a week, 14.6% (21 out of 144) once a month while 47.2% (68 out of 144) of the respondent patronize occasionally.

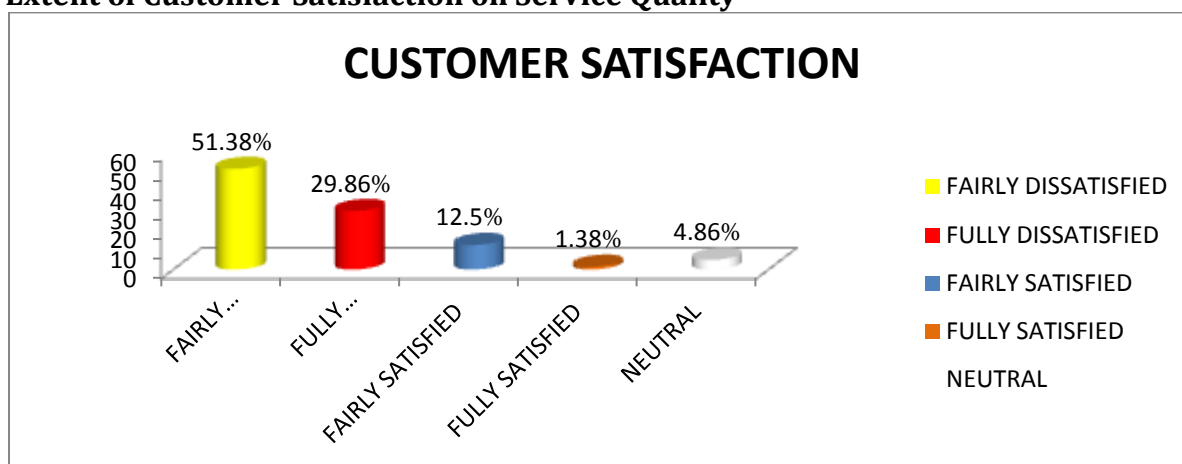
Over-All Service Quality

| SERVICE DIMENSION | SERVICE QUALITY INDEX |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Tangibility | -0.5547 |
| Reliability | -0.6108 |
| Responsiveness | -0.6102 |
| Assurance | -0.6720 |
| Empathy | -0.6212 |
| Average | -0.6138 |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

From table 4.2, the dimensions that reported larger average gaps score from ascending order were assurance (-0.6720), empathy (-0.6212), reliability (-0.6108), responsiveness (-0.6102) and tangibility (-0.5547). This is evident from the negative overall SERVQUAL index of (-0.6138) shows that expectations exceed perceptions in the selected FFRs. Summarily, overall perceived service quality is low (-0.6138) meaning the level of service they receive is lower than what they expect indicating there is no satisfaction. This could be caused either by the under delivering of services to consumers or the over promising of FFRs to consumers on their services (Jenet Manyi, 2011).

Extent of Customer Satisfaction on Service Quality



Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

From table 4.3 it shows the extent of customer satisfaction on service quality, using this scale to determine the extent of customer satisfaction on service quality:

0 = Neutral, 0.10 to 0.99 = Fairly Satisfied, 1.00 to 2.00 above = Fully Satisfied, -0.10 to -0.99 = Fairly Dissatisfied, -1.00 to -2.00 above = Fully Dissatisfied.

Based on this scale, it is shown that 51.38% are fairly dissatisfied, 29.86% are fully dissatisfied, 12.5% are fairly satisfied, 1.38% are fully satisfied while 4.86% are neutral about the service quality (that is there are neither satisfied or dissatisfied). According to disconfirmation theory, Positive disconfirmation occurs when service perceived is better than expected while negative disconfirmation is when service perceived is below expectation. Customer satisfaction occurs by confirmation or positive disconfirmation of consumer expectations, and dissatisfaction is caused by negative disconfirmation of consumer expectations on service quality (Agbemabiese, Patrick and Adu 2015). This implies that customers of the selected FFRs has a negative disconfirmation on the service quality leading to a high rate of customer dissatisfaction of the selected FFRs (51.38%) this was influenced by the perception and expectation of the customers also Parasuraman et al., (1985) suggested that when perceived service quality is high, then it will lead to increase in customer satisfaction.

In this case of fairly dissatisfaction, it indicates that perception is less than expectation ($P < E$) on the service quality which resulted to a negative service quality. Therefore, the result of this research shows that customers of the selected FFRs in Akure metropolis

are fairly satisfied compared to the result of Dipeolu *et al.*, (2014) in their study on Customer Satisfaction in Fast Food Restaurants in Ibadan Metropolis, where 76.2% of the customers considered services of the FFRs as satisfactorily.

Overall Factors that Influence Patronage of the Selected FFRs

| Independent Variables | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Service quality | 29.9 |
| Location | 39.6 |
| Restaurant Image | 28.5 |
| Food Quality | 38.9 |
| Price | 29.9 |
| Varieties of Food | 29.2 |
| Environment | 31.3 |
| Others | 11.1 |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

Table 4.4.2, shows that (29.9%) of the customers are influenced by service quality, (39.6%) are influence by location, (28.6%) are influenced by restaurant image, (38.9%) are influenced by food quality, (29.9%) are influenced by price, (29.2%) are influenced by varieties of food offered in the FFRs, (31.3%) are influenced by the environment while (11.1%) are influenced by other reasons. This indicates that majority of the customers of the selected FFRs are influenced by Location (39.6%) and Food quality (38.9%) respectively not service quality because a customer who is not satisfied with the service quality will not want to patronize but in this case location and food quality happens to be a strong influence on customer's patronage.

Correlation Analysis Showing the Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

| | | FFRs PATRONAGE | SERVICE QUALITY |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| FFRs PATRONAGE | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .47 |
| | Sign. (2-tailed) | | .0578 |
| | N | 144 | 144 |
| SERVICE QUALITY | Pearson Correlation | 0.47 | 1 |
| | Sig.(2.tailed) | .578 | |
| | N | 144 | 144 |

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2016

The Pearson correlation result revealed a positive correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.47$) between service quality and customer's patronage. The p- value was 0.578 level of significance at $n = 144$, which implies that service quality does not significantly influence patronage. This analysis proves the third objective that service quality does not influence patronage but rather location and food quality. Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis should be accepted and the positive hypothesis should be rejected.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

Consumers have higher expectations than what they actually receive the FFRs even though the difference is not wide. To answer our research questions which are; What is the level of service quality, what is the extent of customer satisfaction and does service quality influence patronage how consumers perceive service quality and are consumers satisfied in the selected FFRs, the gap scores analysis carried out provided answers to these questions. The overall perceived service quality is low as expectations exceed perceptions meaning consumers desired more than what was offered to them. As a result of this gap, it is clear that consumers are not satisfied by using the establish weight to measure the extent of customer satisfaction, customers were fairly dissatisfied then the last objective indicated that customer satisfaction were influenced by location and food quality not service quality. Evaluating the perceptions and expectations of consumers, it can be seen that no dimension of service quality brings customer satisfaction.

Finally, the Pearson correlation result revealed a positive correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.47$) between service quality and customer's patronage. The p- value was 0.578 level of significance at $n = 144$, which implies that service quality does not significantly influence patronage. This analysis proves the third objective that service quality does not influence patronage but rather location and food quality. Therefore, based on these findings the null hypothesis was accepted and the positive hypothesis was rejected.

CONCLUSION

This research work identifies the journey so far on assessing customer satisfaction on service quality of FFRs in Akure metropolis Ondo state. The analysis unveils how consumers perceive service quality through SERVQUAL model that poor or low and unsatisfied services were rendered to the numerous customers by the selected FFRs management in this study area. Despite with all these poor service offered, customers are still patronizing the selected FFRs due to its location and food quality. Measuring service quality can help management provide reliable data that can be used to monitor and maintain improved service quality. Using the SERVQUAL model to assess service quality enables management to better understand the various dimensions and how they affect service quality and customer satisfaction. This will help them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and thereby make necessary improvements

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the foregoing, the paper proposes the following recommendations:

1. Findings also show that consumers expected more than what they perceive in the FFRs and hence no satisfaction and this therefore means FFRs must strive hard to improve all the dimensions of service quality in order to bring higher perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.
2. The customers could not indicate whether or not they would retain the services of the FFRs. It is possible that if the quality of service is improved, customers will be more satisfied leading to customer loyalty and retention.
3. Maintaining existing customers should be a better option than chasing for new because a customer who is satisfied will have a positive dissonance about the

service and who always recommend the service to friends and family who are potential customers.

4. Further research should be carried out in order to enhance the understanding of the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction, how they are measured because they are very important for service organizations in terms of profitability, growth and market share.
5. A similar study could be conducted with a larger sample size so that results could be generalized to a larger population.

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