FACTORS LEADING TO QUALITY RELATED CHALLENGES FOR INFORMAL GARAGES: A CASE STUDY OF MBEYA CITY, TANZANIA

Francis Daudi Sinkamba

Tanzania Institute of Accountancy, Mbeya Campus, Mbeya, Tanzania

Abstract: **Success of many organization's depends on the quality of services provided to the customer. Vehicle maintenance is categorized in two types which is preventive maintenance and corrective maintenance. And that maintenance in most of the cities in Tanzania and especially Mbeya region is held at dealers (formal) or local (informal) garages located in different areas of the city. Preventive maintenance is the kind of maintenance which is done based on the scheduled dates fixed in agreement between either the garage or dealer and the customer, while corrective maintenance is the kind of maintenance or repair done to the vehicle after fault has occurred.**

With currently change in technology most of the maintenance and repairs conducted in local garages has been claimed to be of poor quality. The study has looked on the factors which lead to those challenges on the quality delivered by local garages (informal garages) and the case study was local garages located in Mbeya city.

Total of 97 respondents who are mechanics, customers and owners of different informal garages were given questionnaires. The results has demonstrated the followings reasons to be the factors which lead to poor quality delivered to customers; the reasons are Lack of right equipment for repairing, No formal education on repairs and maintenance, No genuine spares, working environment, Lack of incentives. Further it was noticed that most of the reasons mentioned are within the control of the garage and can be rectified.

Based on the reasons for the poor quality delivered by many informal garages to their customers, it is advised to the owners of the local garages to introduce the Customer Relationship Management and quality section in order to control the quality of the service delivered and to manage feedback of the services delivered to their customer.

*Keywords***: Quality, formal Garages, Informal Garages, Maintenance.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Service quality has many definitions, according to Newman, 2001 defines Service quality as the degree and direction between customer service expectations and perceptions. While Parasuraman *et al* 1988, defines Service quality as the overall evaluation of a specific service firm that results from comparing that firms performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform. Service are activities which disappear in use and cannot be stored (Oyetunji *et al.*, 2014). One of the important marketing strategy for organization's is to deliver quality service (Parasunaman *et al*., 1991; Oyetunji *et al*., 2014). Success of any organization depends on the quality provided to the customer (Panda, 2003). Service quality has greater impact on organizational outcome such as increasing sales profit (Levesque and McDougall, 1996; Duncan and Elliot, 2002), improving relationship with customers; assist in building good image to customers (Newman, 2001; Caruana, 2002) . Profit and Growth of any organization is mainly inspired by customer loyalty (Heskett et al., 1997). The probability for serving the customer again increases, if customer is satisfied with the services provided (East, 1997)

The service sector in Tanzania has a big impact to the economy, according to Tanzania Economic Outlook 2016, service sector contributes almost 50% of GDP. It is envisaged that the sector of automobile garages will increase in the country as

time goes on, since the number of vehicle sold was estimated to increase by 20% in 2016 and reach a total 0f 76,102 units in a year and the used vehicles are the ones dominating the majority of the cars sold and imported in the country (BMI Research, 2016)

Vehicle maintenance strategies consists of mainly two approaches which is corrective maintenance and preventive maintenance. In the corrective maintenance, maintenance is done after a fault has occurred while preventive maintenance it is done for the purpose of keeping the vehicle in good condition after a certain interval by replacing fluids and some spare parts (You *et al.*, 2005)

Vehicle maintenance in most of east African countries is conducted in formal and informal garages. Mechanics in the informal sector performs a large number of repairs (Mairura and Osoro, 2015). It is estimated that 75% of customers repairs their cars in informal garages after the end of the warranty given to the customers by car dealers (Brito *et al.*, 2007) and most of those garages are located in urban areas for the easy access of spare parts, petrol stations and other supporting businesses to the garages .Further, with changes in motor vehicle technology, the quality delivered by most of the informal garages is not of acceptable standards (Mairura and Osoro, 2015), in comparison to the quality offered by formal garages (Kipkurui, Kithyo, Okemwa & Korir, 2004) . This problem of the quality offered to customer's bringing their cars for maintenance and repair has been a great problem in many of the east African countries, and Tanzania being one of those countries, . Due to aforementioned reasons, the study intends to know the reasons which have led to poor services in local garages which are located in Mbeya City.

2.   METHODOLOGY

2.1 Area of Study

The area of study for this research paper is Mbeya City. The area was selected since it has all representative characteristics expected in the research. Mbeya City is located in south western part of Tanzania. According to 2012 Census, population of Mbeya city is 385,279.

2.2 Sampling Procedure

There are two common sampling procedures, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample. In this type of sampling items for the sample are selected deliberately (Kothari, 2004). Non probability sampling was used in this study because the exact number of informal garages is not known.

2.3 Sample Size

The sample size used was 97 respondents, which include mechanics, customers and owners of the garages who are working in different informal garages located in Mbeya city. The sample size was selected randomly. Out of total respondents, female respondent was 9 and the remaining 88 respondents were male.

2.4 Data Collection.

Data were collected by using Questionnaires. Questionnaires were used for the purpose of giving respondents enough time for providing carefully answers without interference.

2.5 Data Processing and Analysis

The data gathered, were analyzed by using SPSS.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Availability of quality department to the garage

The results revealed that, 96% of the informal garages do not have the quality department responsible for checking the quality of the services delivered by those garages. This shows that, there is the need for the introduction of quality department in informal garages for the checking of quality of the service provided to the customers.

3.2 Lack of right equipment for repairing

The results revealed that, 89% of the respondents pointed that, the reason for poor quality on repairs is caused by the garages, not to have right equipment for maintenance. This shows that there is no right equipment in many garages for maintenance and repairs of vehicle.

3.3 No formal education on repairs and maintenance

The results revealed that, 90% of the respondents sees lack of formal education on repairs and maintenance as the reason for the poor quality, most of the mechanics joined the garage after finishing standard seven, and they gained skills and knowledge through learning from experienced mechanics in the garage. This shows there is the need for vocational education for mechanics before they join garages for performing different related tasks of maintenance.

3.4 No genuine spares

The results revealed that 70% of the respondents agreed on the reason that, poor quality delivered is caused by non-genuine spares available in the market which hence cause the service delivered to be not of the acceptable standard. This shows that if the market will deliver genuine spares the problem of quality in garages will be reduced to the greater extent.

3.5 Working environment

The results revealed that 80% of the respondents said that, working environment of the garage leads to the poor quality delivered to the customers. This shows that, if the working environment will be modified the quality of the services will be improved.

3.6 Lack of incentives

The results revealed that 60% of the respondents see the problem of the quality is influenced sometimes by the mechanics being not motivated by the incentives, so they work with no morale hence the quality of the services being affected; the results show that, if incentives will be provided to the mechanics, the quality of the services will somehow improve.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion the results has revealed that most of the reasons which cause poor quality to the services are within the control of the garages owners, while only few reasons where out of their control. Further the results shows that, if the situation of poor services delivered to the customers will not be rectified; the customers will be shifting from one garage to the other garages on looking for more efficient service. The shifting of the customers will have negative impact to the garage since the income of the garage will decrease and hence cause the reduction of the profit. It is further advised to the owners of the garages to measure the quality of the service they deliver to their customers in order to know their position in the market before things changes by the customer either being not satisfied with the service they receive from a particular garage and hence shift to the other garages. Moreover, it is advised for the owners of the garages to introduce Customer Relationship Management in order to have feedback from their customers so as to work immediately on feedbacks given by the customers to the garages based on the service they have received, also it is advised to the owners of the garages to introduce quality departments in their garages in order to track the quality of the service in progress and after the completion of the services delivered to their customers by doing so it will be easy to know the quality related problems before they are noticed by their customers.

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