



The High Performance Movement

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National customer service survey: How we did it

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The Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) in conjunction with Conference Link will again be launching their Customer Service Survey nationwide. This major investigation of customer attitudes to service in Namibia is an exercise without parallel anywhere in Africa. This year again, it is the second such survey, the team from Business Intelligence Africa (BIA) will visit 1500 homes all over Namibia to gauge perceptions of customer service for the following 13 key service sectors: Supermarkets, Telecommunications, Education Services, Banks, Home Affairs, Car Dealerships, Health Services, Insurance Services, Convenience Food Outlets, Municipal Services, Post Office Services, Leisure Services, Energy Services.

Following the 2014 survey, the media and consumer agencies have been asking two questions. Firstly, how exactly was the survey conducted, and what is the format for 2015? Secondly, how can we use the results- and can we trust them? The first question is fairly easy to answer, in the table below is a profile of the survey detailing its vital specifications in a format that is widely used and respected by research agencies of international repute.

The second question- how we use the results and whether we can trust them- requires a little more explanation. In lay-terms we can use the results if: the research methodology is of high quality, and if the results have practical value. Research Methodology

The whole area of customer service quality measurement for the last 30 years has been dominated by a tool called SERVQUAL invented by three American researchers Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (PBZ) in 1985. They showed that the quality of service received by customers could be accurately measured by five unique attributes of service, namely: Reliability, Responsive-

Customer Service Survey - 2015

Survey Objectives:
Ascertain customer perceptions of key Namibian services

Dates of Fieldwork: May to mid-August 2015

Fieldwork by: Business Intelligence Africa

Sample size:
1,500 household with approximately 5 service categories being rated at each household resulting in approximately 6000 to 7000 responses

Sampling frame:
2011 Namibia Population and Housing Census

Sample universe:
Citizens of Namibia who are 18 years and older

Sample design:
Nationally representative, random, clustered, stratified, multi-stage area probability sample

Stratification:
Region and urban - rural location

Stages: PSUs (from strata), start points, households, respondents

PSU selection:
Probability proportionate to population size (PPPS)

Household selection:
Randomly selected start points, followed by walk pattern using 5/10 interval

Sampling Principles:
BIA uses national probability samples designed to meet the following criteria:

Samples Design:
Is designed to generate a sample that is a representative cross-section of all citizens of voting age in a given country. The goal is to give every adult citizen an equal and known chance of being

selected for an interview. This is achieved by:

- Using random selection methods at every stage of sampling;
- Sampling at all stages with probability proportionate to population size (PPPS) wherever possible to ensure that larger (i.e., more populated) geographic units have a proportionally greater probability of being chosen into the sample.
- Interviews are being done in areas which consist of 70% of the Namibian population.

The sampling universe:
Normally includes all citizens age 18 and older. As a standard practice, we exclude people living in institutionalized settings, such as students in dormitories, patients in hospitals, and persons in prisons or nursing homes.

Sample size and design:
The sample design is a clustered, stratified and area probability sample. Specifically, we first stratify the sample according to the main sub-national unit of government (regions, etc.) and by urban or rural location.

Respondent selection:
Generally, respondents in a chosen household are selected randomly, but a gender quota is filled by alternating interviews between men and women.

Survey Languages:
The questionnaire is designed in English.

Survey Length:
Interviews usually take about one hour and only proceed after respondents have given informed consent. Strict confidentiality is required in handling survey returns.

Survey Quota Distribution:
The survey is done in 3 waves of 500 interviews in each wave. This guarantees a relatively even distribution of the sample for all the categories in the survey.

ness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles. This approach has been so well established it has almost been assumed that it cannot be improved. However, work done by researchers at the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) has demonstrated that SERVQUAL can be improved. Researchers at HP-GSB argue there are

two key flaws in SERVQUAL. Firstly, in the original work by PBZ there were 10 attributes which they reduced to 5 presumably, because it made the survey too long for the customer, thereby reducing the accuracy of the tool. Secondly, a fixed survey of 5 attributes (or 22 questions), which every customer must answer, assumes all customers have the same expectations

from a service, an idea which clearly does not stand up to scrutiny. For example, in a supermarket one customer's expectation may be for a wide choice of products, whereas another may just want a few items quickly, so speed of service may be the main expectation.

During the Namibian Customer Service Survey, people will be presented with the original 10 attributes identified in the early PBZ research and asked to select the five most important attributes to them at the time of using the service. Once those attributes have been selected, the interviewee (customer) will only be asked questions relating to those attributes selected. By using this adaptive approach, researchers at HP-GSB aim to overcome both of the key flaws in SERVQUAL. This small change is a major advance in the study of service quality and significantly adds to the quality of the survey process.

Practical Value

The survey provides companies and government departments with vital information for managing the customer service experience based on three key perspectives:

- Internal Perspective:** The data informs managers about key areas of strength and weakness in their services and provides a map to identify the areas of greatest concern to their customers. This information will enable managers to take precise remedial actions to improve the customer service experience.
- Benchmark Perspective:** The standardised aspect of the survey will enable managers to compare and benchmark their performance with peers in their industry and service suppliers in other industries.
- Trend Perspective:** This is the second year that the survey will be run; from now on the suppliers will be able to ascertain trend information on the service performance. Are the changes they are implementing having the desired effect on the customer experience?

For more information on the CSMA Survey go to www.csmafrica.org

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