Influence of Service Delivery Strategies on Customer Satisfaction at the British High Commission in Kenya

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Abstract- Despite the public complaints on the services being delivered at the British High Commission (BHC) there has been reluctance in addressing the concerns raised from the public. This study investigated the influence of service delivery strategies on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission (BHC) in Kenya. The specific objectives that were studied are the effect of back office, front office services and virtual office services on customer satisfaction; and the influence of customer service expectations on customer satisfaction at the BHC. The researcher used assimilation, contrast and negativity theories as some of the theories for customer satisfaction. Exploratory design was used alongside descriptive research. Closed ended questionnaires were used in the study. A pilot study of 11 respondents was carried out at the British High Commission. The data was analysed by use of content analysis, both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Inferential statistics were used to make inferences about the population based on results obtained from samples. Researcher used Chi-Square tests which attempted to establish the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables which are categorical in nature. The researcher presents the quantitative data using tables. Qualitative data was presented through content narration. Many respondents agreed on the accuracy of documents in visa processing by the back office at the British High Commission. In findings on front office operation, there were a total of 97 responses that indicated poor coordination, facilitation and communication, especially from the security at the entrance on the processes and requirements for visa application. Regarding the virtual services, the respondents noted that there were no consumer surveys that provide a clear perception on the services offered at the British High Commission. Some were of the view that the individual feedback is never taken into consideration. The study recommended for the need of annual open days within the BHC that creates opportunity for the mission staff to engage with the local public regarding the visa services offered and other related services that are available and that the security team should not have knowledge limited to the issues in their domain.

Index Terms- Customer satisfaction, Back office services, Front office services, Virtual

I. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is the focus of organisations aimed at meeting the expectation of after the actual cumulative performance. Many people equate value with quality for achieving customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are an important goal and an important asset for successful organizations. When customers believe they have received a high service value from one service provider they are more likely to display loyalty behaviour, including relationship continuance, increased scale or scope of relationship, and recommendations for that service provider (Ostroff, 2010).

Meeting customers' needs is aimed at giving customers what they want, when they want it and how they want it. Behind the approach is a customer-focused philosophy aimed at delivering the services that customer seek, market share and profits are derived by keeping close remote customers (Mullings, 2002). The greater the levels of satisfaction, the more consumers are expected to reward the company with their long-term loyalty, which should result in healthy profits over a long period of time (Barbara, Bryant and Claes, 2005).

Customer satisfaction is responding to customer needs and expectations in a way that will make them have a memorable experience and motivate them to come back and to tell others. In this, competitive world, business as well as diplomatic organizations and embassies must understand the importance of customer as its future or growth is concerned. It must understand that its existence lies in the hands of the customer and therefore the service provider should make many efforts at all costs to attract, maintain and capture customer's loyalty. It should seek first the needs and wants of the target population and deliver them in an efficient and effective way that satisfies the target population (Lee and Yoo, 2000).

Other studies, such as Gummesson (2006) and Storbacka et al. (2004) discussed the link between satisfaction and loyalty. Serving experienced customers will result in higher productivity for the service providers because those customers have become familiar with an organization's service delivery system. As a result, loyal customers can contribute to the productivity gain of the service delivery system by making suggestions for improvement or just simply being more cooperative with aim of getting satisfaction fulfilment (Lau, 2000).

Sevottam (2012) observes that performance excellence the world over is assessed on two kinds of parameters: the results that the organization can show, and the manner in which the results are being achieved. The British High Commissions together comprise the UK's "diplomatic missions" overseas. The role of a UK diplomatic mission is to function as the channel of communication between the British government and that of the host country, to act as the official representative of the UK in general, and in respect of specific public agencies with local interests in that country, and to promote the interests of the UK

and its citizens in that country. Diplomatic missions are also sent to international organizations and conferences, with similar roles (GOUK, 2014)

Among the services provided by the British High Commission include: visas, travel advice, support for British nationals abroad, notarial and documentary services, passports and emergency travel documents, births, deaths and marriages, data protection and out-of-hours emergency assistance. There are over 1,350 people working in British embassies/high commissions worldwide who assist with processing entry clearance applications (UK Visa Bureau, 2014)

There is growing recognition that, despite significant increases in resourcing, public service delivery is still failing (Harris et al., 2012). Despite bold plans and massive injections of international and domestic resources, public customer satisfaction is still failing in many areas. This suggests that there is a need to revisit approaches to assisting service delivery sectors. Mcloughlin and Batley (2012) study on service delivery confirms there is fairly generic terms about political and governance constraints. For example, concepts like 'political will' or the existence of 'weak incentives' are often referred to but rarely further developed in terms of the specific institutional and governance arrangements that contribute to these factors, and in terms of which of these may offer strategies for overcoming common bottlenecks or gaps. According to Ostroff (2010) in his study on client satisfaction, he notes that there is a mismatch from the expectations and the actual outcome from the services received by clients.

The general perception in the public domain relating to service delivery at high commissions in Kenya is that there is a complete detachment between service providers at the commission and service recipients, the customers. This is evidenced by the numerous cases highlighted in the local media relating to complaints by customers of unfair treatment at the commissions (Harris et al., 2012).

Despite the public complaints on the services being delivered at the British High Commission (BHC), there has been reluctance in addressing the concerns raised from the public. There exist no direct feedback mechanism between the BHC and the consumers of the services-both public and government. The BHC has overtime turned out to be an island that does not consider the operating environment. No simple customer feedback mechanisms like the suggestion box; instead there is an enquiry email address that rarely responded to all the concerns raised. When the response is made in some of the enquiries, it normally dwells on defensive line instead of addressing the concerns raised (Stefan, 2014). The BHC has turned out to be more of a political department in the local politics than restricting to its mandate of diplomatic representation (Ibid). Under the circumstances, it is difficult to meet the customer expectations within the realm of the actual service provided. As a result, there is high level of distrust in the related services provided at the BHC and the public perception on level of satisfaction. The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of service delivery strategies on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission.

The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of service delivery strategies on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission in Kenya. The specific objectives were examine the effect of back office services on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission in Kenya, to assess the effect of front office services on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission in Kenya, to examine the effect of virtual office services on customer satisfactions at the British High Commission in Kenya and to assess the influence of customer service expectations on customer satisfaction at the British High Commission

The findings of this study will be useful to the British High Commission office in Kenya, its employees and academicians. Firstly, the findings will be useful to the British High Commission office in Kenya in reviewing its standard operating procedures and customer satisfaction frameworks to improve on its quality of service delivery and ensure that procedures followed in serving customers ensure their satisfaction. To employees, the study findings will provide useful insights on how to serve customers better to ensure their satisfaction at all times. This will be critical to the overall image of the commission's office in Kenya. The findings of the study will also be useful to academicians interested in conducting further research in relation to the recommendation that will be given for further research areas.

The researcher was faced with the problem of identifying and locating the previous customers at the British High Commission. The researcher used the existing records to identify location of customers, for example the previous Visa applicants with complaints. As a remedy, the researcher enlisted the services of research assistant that is was experienced in data collection and setting aside adequate financial resources to ensure successful completion of the exercise. Some of the respondents were also unable to provide all the information due to the sensitive nature of this research. The researcher explained the purpose as being academic in nature without any ill intention of victimising individuals.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories that can be used to explain customer satisfaction in service delivery. According to Barbara, Bryant and Claes (2005), theoretical approaches are broadly classified in three categories; attribution, equity and expectancy disconfirmation. The level of satisfaction is linked to the comparison of the expected and the actual performance of the service to the required expectation by the client. This process is described as either confirmation or disconfirmation to the expectation of the clients regarding the particular service. As an example, the expectancy disconfirmation theory suggests that consumers form satisfaction judgments through individual and group evaluation of the actual satisfaction derived from the service. Four psychological theories were identified by Anderson that can be used to explain the impact of expectancy or satisfaction: Assimilation, Contrast, Generalized Negativity, and Assimilation-Contrast.

2.1.1 Assimilation Theory

The theory of assimilation states that clients to a service make some kind of comparison regarding the expectation on the specific service and the actual performance that is viewed as a

post usage evaluation of the service received. According to Wirtz (2003), consumers of the service seek to avoid dissonance by making an adjustment of their perceptions regarding the specific service to ensure it is according to their expectations. The service clients can make a choice to adjust their expectation to match with the actual performance of the service provider in order to avoid any potential tension for failing to meet the expectation by the service provider. The theory assumes that there is a relationship that exists between satisfaction and expectation. It also assumes the clients to the specific service have motivation to make adjustments on both expectations and the actual performance of the service consumed.

2.1.2 Contrast Theory

Contrast theory was first introduced by Hovland, Harvey and Sherif (1987). Gerpott et al., (2001) define contrast theory as the tendency to magnify the discrepancy between one's own attitudes and the attitudes represented by opinion statements. Contrast theory presents an alternative view of the consumer post-usage evaluation process than was presented in assimilation theory in that post-usage evaluations lead to results in opposite predictions for the effects of expectations on satisfaction. According to the contrast theory, any discrepancy of experience from expectations will be exaggerated in the direction of discrepancy. If the firm raises expectations in his advertising, and then a customer's experience is only slightly less than that promised, the product/service would be rejected as totally un-satisfactory.

2.1.3 Theory of Negativity

This theory is originally traced to Carlsmith and Aronson (1963) as the proponents. It argues that any form discrepancy in relation to the actual performance from the intended expectations will affect the individual, producing some kind of negative energy. Gerpott et el. (2001) argues that the theory of Negativity has its genesis in disconfirmation process. According to this theory, when expectations are convincingly upheld, it creates room for consumers to respond negatively to any disconfirmation. Dissatisfaction will appear when the actual performance is less than the expectations.

2.1.4 Theory of Disconfirmation

The theory of disconfirmation states that satisfaction is linked to extent size and direction of the experience of disconfirmation that takes place as an outcome of comparison between actual performance and the consumption expectation of the service. According to this theory, satisfaction is the consumers achieved fulfilment.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the independent variables namely: back office services, front office service, virtual office services and customer perception and the dependent variable is the customer satisfaction at the British High Commission office in Kenya.
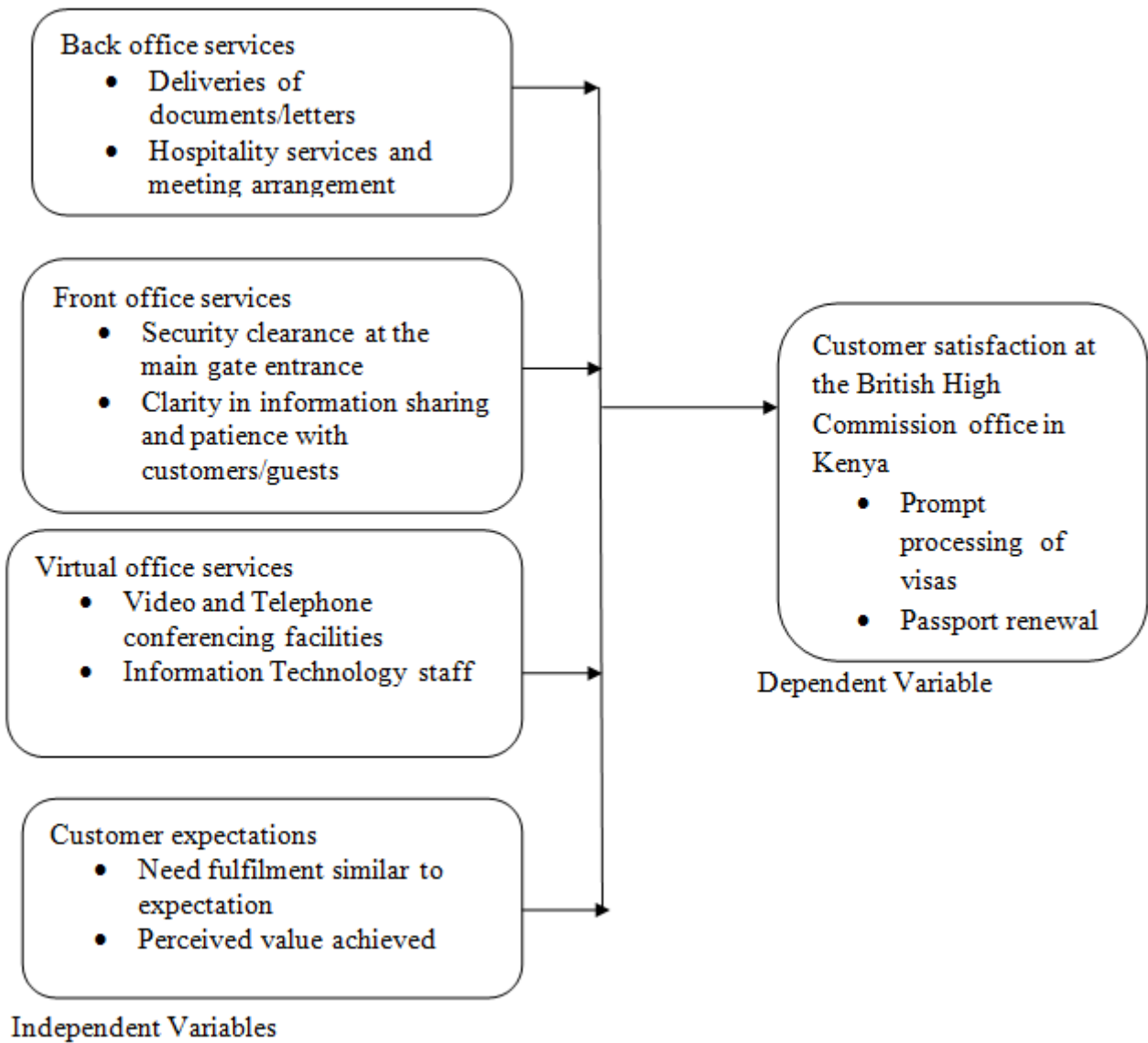
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.3 Empirical Review

The concept of customer service has taken root in both public and private sectors in Kenya. The foreign High commissions and Embassies in Kenya have undergone management as well as service delivery reviews with the aim of leading as a showcase of expertise in service provision to the customer satisfaction level. According to survey conducted by the British High Commission (2013), the provision of quality service to the customers is crucial for meeting the service satisfaction to the customers. By understanding and ensuring the customers' needs are met, the British High Commission can effectively contribute to the improvement of the quality service being provided.

Caryforth et el. (2004) notes that Organisations that provide services in an excellent manner to their clients, achieve a lot of benefits to their customers as well as organizations. The High Commissions and Embassies that offer good standard services to the customers can depend on the use of word of mouth to increase the overall number of new customers without doing advertisement. The dissatisfied customers are a threat to the reputation of the organization and may to greater extent keep away new potential customers.

Customer service includes various functions besides the proactive selling of both services and products; it involves one to one interactions with customers in person, through telecommunication which include the use of mail service. It is designed and performed with the agenda of achieving satisfaction of customers and the level of efficiency in operational functions. The behaviour of service provider during the interaction with the customers is a mirror of what takes place within the organization. The customer attitude of the service is linked to the overall behaviour and personal traits of the service provider, rooted in the doing business philosophy of the organization that is based

on commitment and customer satisfaction as the key priority for the organization.

It is vital to be aware of the demographic key characteristics of the customers and their individual beliefs, preferences, social habits, expectations and attitudes. The manner in which problems are resolved has a long term crucial ramifications to the top loyalty of customers and the overall success of the organization. Customer satisfaction from the services leads to contentment and builds trust and confidence in the existing services. Once the needs of the customers are met, there is a high chance of retaining the old clients and attracting new clients.

According to Awara (2010), everyone in the organization is responsible for the ensuring quality excellent quality services. To a great extent, it is the management responsibility to mould good atmosphere that fosters services that are customer driven by prioritizing their interests. The achievement of incredibly excellent customer service is a direct output of good managers that ensures it happens.

2.4 Research Gaps

The literature reviewed in this study points to the fact that a number of studies relating to the subject matter of this study have been done, while empirical evidence on most other areas are lacking. It is also evident that most of those studies already done, a majority of them are from around the globe and in and around Africa establishing a gap in terms of scope providing a rationale for further research attempts to zero in on this gap, especially in relation to the local context.

To start with regarding back office services, no analytical evidence has been found to indicate how back office services affect service delivery and customer satisfaction at the High Commissions' office in Kenya. This calls for an attempt to do the same to bridge this gap (Goluboff, 2009). In addition, as relates to front office services no evidence is available of a study that has attempted examining these services on service delivery at the High commissions' office in Kenya.

Finally, most of the studies done on virtual office services have been skewed towards online services but again not based service delivery at the British High commissions' office. Consequently, it is in this background the researcher contemplates the need to further explore and document the same for use in academia and in practice.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research design was used in the study. This involved exploration of causes and effects of the independent and dependent variables associated with the problem. The research methodology also used descriptive approach combined with exploratory design. The study population consisted of all customers to the British High Commission office in Kenya. The UK Visa Bureau (2014) approximates that at least 10,000 customers sought the services of the High Commission office in Kenya each year. However, only about 10,000 customers interact physically with the High Commission employees per year. This represents the number of customers that have characteristic to be measured.

Table 3.1: Population

Category	Pop frequency
Locals	8,000
Foreigners from Africa	1,600
Foreigners from outside Africa	400
Total	**10,000**

(Source: UK Visa Bureau, 2014)

The sample size for the study was calculated using Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) formula for sample size determination for population more than 10,000. The sample size for British High Commission was estimated within 95% confidence interval. Table 3.1 indicates that there is an estimate of about 10, 1000 customers visiting the British High Commission, while table 3.2 shows the sample population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), when the population of the study is more than 10,000 individuals, 384 of them are recommended for as the desired sample size given that Z statistic is 1.96 at 95% confidence level as shown in the following formula.

$N = (z^2 P_q)/d^2$

Where:

N = the desired sample size (when the population is less than 10,000)

Z = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level

P = the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristic being measured

$q = 1-p$

d = the level of statistical significance set

$384 = 1.96^2(0.5)(0.5)/(0.05)^2$

Therefore,

$$nf = 384/(1 + 384/10000)$$
$$nf - 369.8 = 370 \text{ respondents}$$

Since resources and time are a major constraint the above procedure helped in guiding the researcher in determining the sample size. The study used 30% of the desired sample size of 370 respondents which was 111 persons of the desired target population.

Table 3.2: Sample Size

Category	Population frequency	Sample size
Locals (Kenyan)	8,000	89
Other African citizens	1,600	18
Other citizens from outside Africa	400	4
Totals	**10,000**	**111**

(Source: UK Visa Bureau, 2014)

The study used random sampling technique so as to achieve desired representation of the respondents from the study's target population. The two main types of random procedures include simple random sampling and stratified random sampling. Primary data was collected mainly by the use of structured questionnaires. The first part sought to obtain general information or bio data of the respondents. The second part was

devoted to the identification of determinants of service delivery strategies the British High Commission's office in Kenya. The questionnaire helped in collecting as much information as possible. The structured questionnaires were administered by dropping the questionnaire to the respondents and picking them after a period of one week. It also involved use of email to send the questionnaires for respondents' feedback. Closed ended questionnaires were also used because of their restriction to the specific responses. The questionnaire items were set based on the study objectives and research questions that were tested. It reduced capturing of other irrelevant issues to the study. Email use facilitated easy communication from customers outside Kenya. Secondary data was collected through the literature and empirical review of existing information on the study topic as reviewed from text books, journals, and newspaper articles, published and unpublished theses.

A pilot study of 10% (8 respondents) of the desired sample size of 111 respondents was used at the British High Commission. The pre-test was subjected to the internal consistency technique using the Kunder-Richardson (K-R) 20 formula which is as follows:

$KR_{20} = (K) (S^{2-\Sigma}S^2)/ (K-1)$

Where:

KR_{20} = Reliability coefficient of internal consistency

K = Number of items used to measure the concept

S^2 = Variance of all scores

S^2 = Variance of individual items

A high coefficient implies that items correlate highly among themselves indicating that there exists consistency among the items in measuring the concept of interest (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999)

Data was analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis. The researchers first described and summarized the data by use of descriptive statistics. This enabled the researcher meaningfully describe the distribution of results depending on the variables in the study and the scale of measurements used. Inferential statistics was used to make inferences about the population based on results obtained from samples. Researcher also used Chi-Square tests which attempted to establish the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables which are categorical in nature. The reason for choice of Chi Square analysis was because the technique can be used on data that has been measured on nominal scale and can be used to see the difference between two or more groups of categories. The questionnaires were coded and the data keyed into the computer using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS V-17) as well as STATA (10/12) Statistical Software. The researchers presented the quantitative data using tables. Frequency tables are used. Qualitative data is presented through content narration.

IV. DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the information as recorded from the field. The primary data is discussed within the chapter. The response based on the research instrument tabulated responses. Analysis of the findings is also captured in this chapter and presented based on the four research objectives.

4.2 Response Rate

The questionnaire return rate is as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Respondent	Frequency response	Percentage (%)
Response	108	99
No response	3	1
Total	101	100

From Table 4.1, an entire 99% response rate was realized being far above the 70% that Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) say is excellent response.

4.3 General Information

4.3.1 Age of respondents

Out of the 108 population that respondent, 101 were above the age of 30 years and 7 below 30 years. The first category comprise of the business people and individuals visiting United Kingdom (UK) as well as those on transit. 5 of the respondents less than 30 years old were students seeking further studies in the United Kingdom (UK) and 2 were refugees moving to UK.

4.3.2 Level of Education of Respondents

97 of the respondents were University graduates, 8 tertiary college graduates and 6 respondents did not indicate the level of education. On average, the respondents were educated up to the University level.

4.3.4 Demographics of Respondents

Majority of respondents at 101 were of African Origin. Out of which 81 were Kenyans, 20 were from West African, but working in Kenya.10 of the respondents were British citizens that comprised of 3 tourists whose visa expired while on touring Kenya, 7 had issues with the expiry dates of their passports. In general, all the respondents were residents in Kenya.

4.4.5 Pilot Study Findings

All the 8 respondents were purposively chosen by the researcher. The instruments were found to be well for the topic. However 5 of the respondents proposed telephone call as a follow up the selected respondents on the delivered questionnaires rather than just waiting for their feedback. They also suggested that each of the five sections of the data collection instruments should be discussed in the findings as well as recommendations based on both independent and dependent variables.

4.4 Front Office

The respondents' views on the front office are captured in frequency table in the next page

Table 4.2 Front Office Response

	Agree	%	Disagree	%
Poor coordination	97	96	3	3
Poor facilitation and communication	97	96	3	3
Poor handling and reliability	97	96	3	3
Lack assurance	90	89	11	10.9

There were a total of 97 responses that agreed on the level of poor coordination, facilitation and communication. 90 confirmed absence of assurance on the services and security related clearances. Cumulatively, a total of 97 agreed with the statements as framed. While 11 did not agree on the suggested statements in questionnaire. There was no clarity on the respondents' side regarding the visa processing, the relationship between British High Commission (BHC) and the Visa processing office in South Africa. No reliability of information attained from the front office at the pedestrian entry gate on the guideline for visa application. This is in agreement with Vallen et al. (2009) who argue that reliability, coordination and communication are the virtues of front office that either creates confidence in public or led to the loss of confidence based on the client judgement. Some of the security officers at the gate still believe the visas are applied and processed at the BHC office in Nairobi with backstopping from the South Africa office.

Front office, as mentioned in chapter two, the first customer face of the British High Commission (BHC) that clients meets, and the first port of call for the majority of clients with any enquiries and problems. The 97 respondents acknowledged the existence of poor coordination, facilitation and communication. This could be linked to the inconsistency of information from the front office staff regarding the services offered at BHC. The responses also related to the security officers that are create a sense of intimidation while armed and standing at the gate. The responses are in line with the arguments of Baker and Riley (2005) who argued that the front office is the first step that creates the first impression. The responses faced challenges in getting security clearance from the main gate even with appointments.

The unfriendly character of the security staff in providing clear guidance on the direction to the different offices contributed to the responses as captured. The transfer of visa processing to South Africa appears not to have been well communicated to the BHC staff at the front office. The understanding of some security officers that the visa processing

is still done at BHC is linked to misinformation regarding the new arrangements. The limited information within the front office creates a sense of uncoordinated team at BHC in meeting the customer satisfaction.

As argued by Vallen et al. (2009) in literature review, the front office is supposed to have general information regarding the services offered by BHC; unfortunately the team appears to have limited information rather than detailed awareness and guidance to the customers.

The respondents' views confirm absence of standard operating procedures and guideline on the services that are offered at the British High Commission. The front office team is less knowledgeable of both the standards and the services in place, in order for the objectives to be achieved. In relation to standards, it is the front office team's job to ensure that the customer's first contact with the BHC is a positive experience. This all important first impression will be based upon the welcome and the efficiency of the check-in process, both of which pertain to the standards in place. Incorporated into the delivery of these standards is customer service. In order for a front office team to be able to deliver these dimensions, it is important that they receive the correct training. This is down to the BHC management. It is based upon their experience, knowledge and management style that the customers can appreciate the services offered at the front office. The level of front office engagement with clients contributes to the perception of customers on the services offered at the BHC. In order for a front office team to be able to deliver these dimensions, it is important that they receive the correct training. This is down to the manager; it is based upon their experience, knowledge and management style.

4.5 Back Office

The respondents' views on the back office are captured in frequency table below.

Table 4.3 Back office response

Type of response	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total
Documents accuracy	101	91	10	9	111
Customer experience	04	3.6	107	96.3	111
Use of feedback	08	7.2	103	92.8	111
Flexibility	0	0	111	100	111

The respondents raised concern on the level of accuracy on the visa documents. 10 of them complained of spelling errors on their names as well as gender, while 101 agreed on the accuracy of documents in visa processing. The standard level of accuracy is in agreement with Xerox Corporation (2012) that argues for fewer inaccuracies in the back office services. The visa processing staff had minimal inaccuracies on the processed visas. They argued that the request for correction of the visa and application documents takes over two weeks for the changes to be made. It becomes costly for some of the visa applicants who travel from far in requesting for changes arising from errors. It also creates inconvenience when the visa is to be amended because of the errors that are made. A total of 107 indicated that there was no utilisation of customer experience based on the feedback on the services. Out of the 107 respondents, 2 confirmed having raised concern on the delays of getting their visas processed. The British High Commission instead went on defensive by publishing a complementary page in the Kenyan newspapers outlining the processes for visa application.

The respondents indicated that there seem to be little lessons learnt from the past experience of clients. Another 103 were even not sure if their feedback had ever been analysed and considered. Most of the respondents were alarmed at the number inaccuracies despite the official complains raised earlier. All agreed that there was no flexibility on the back office services and coupled with inefficiencies in processing the visa. All the respondents noted the delays in getting their visas on time with no explanation and apologies from the visa office. Some of the visa staff attributed the delays due to the current office in South Africa. However, the respondents clearly indicated that the delays have been experienced even before the moving of visa office to Pretoria in South Africa.

Back office can affect the performance of staff in significant way. The low morale of staff contributes to the occurrences of errors on the visa processing of documents. Majority of the respondents, at 101 agreed on that the processed visas were accurate. The accuracy could be linked to the right systems and strategies in place, BHC effectively assesses and manages the back-office operations to increase productivity, reduce errors, minimize costs and maximize the customer experience. The back office managers know the expectations in the service delivery as required by the customers. They understand the work and the cyclical nature of the services offered. They rely on experience and the good work ethics in ensuring smooth operation. The back office has the capacity, skills and good work schedules that manage large volumes of transactions in a consistently high-quality and efficient manner is challenging but critical to BHC's overall success. The response is in line with Xerox Corporation (2012) as noted in the literature review where the capacity of the staff contributes to the successful service delivery to customers. System related training has been rolled out among the staff that has ensured well-grounded staff in offering services to customers.

The 10 respondents that were not happy with the information characterised by inaccuracies, argued that the request for correction of the visa and application documents takes over two weeks for the changes to be made. This kind of response is linked to the period when the visa processing was in transition period of moving from Nairobi to Pretoria in South Africa. Because of the recruitment of new staff after the three year service of the United Kingdom based staff in the country office and the training that is involved, there is likely hood of errors on the documents while processing the visas. The use of customer experience feedback, especially related to the past complains is not a reference point because such experiences were specific and cannot be generalised within the back office services.

The issue of flexibility is not applicable within the visa back office team. This is a civil service work that is purely bureaucracy. As a bureaucracy, there are always specific ways of doing things. Any type of change has to go through the overall civil service reform which takes time. The flexibility issue also depends on specific scenario, but cannot be generalised. Where applicable, the British High Commission staff may use discretion powers in the service provision based on specific issue in consultation with other team members.

4.6 Virtual Office Services
The respondents' views on the front office are captured in frequency table shown on the next page.

Table 4.4 Virtual office response

Level of response	Agree	%	Strongly agree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly disagree	%	Neutral	%	Total
Consumer surveys	00	0	0	0	111	100	0	0	0	0	111
Social network	04	3.6	0	0	0	0	107	96.4	0	0	111
Effective technology	09	8.1	0	0	102	91.9	0	0	0	0	111

All the respondents noted that there were no consumer surveys that provide a clear perception on the services offered at the British High Commission. The finding collaborates with Thornburg (2007) who argued that feedback mechanism through client survey was important in understanding the perception of customers of the virtual services. Some were of the view that the

individual feedback is never taken into consideration. The 107 individuals strongly disagreed that the use of media, social network and technology facilitates customer satisfaction. All the 107 of the respondents expressed their frustrations on using these facilities. There is preference for virtual meetings rather than one to one physical meeting. Some of the simplest things like enquiries are never answered on time. It takes an average of two week to get response from staff. According to 60 respondents, use of technology like the virtual meeting rooms through video conferencing has reduced the time taken in scheduling the physical one to one meetings. They also indicated that such facilities are not reliable since they most of the time they either breakdown during the session. They also are vulnerable to technical errors leading to failures during the remote session of the meetings. 9 agreed on effective use of technology and 102 disagreed based on their past experience.

The respondents noted that the normal telephone calls are not responded on time. The main reception takes time in receiving calls as well as connecting to the extension line of the respective staff. Because of the tight schedules, some of the staff requests for follow up call to the clients but they hardly call back, if they do then it is late. 40 respondents complained of being asked to cut short the teleconference to give room for another meeting, the reason provided is the scarcity of meeting rooms; hence some meetings are prioritised more than others depending on the staff arranging the meeting.

The delivery of customer service also requires an understanding and an efficient use of technology, as highlighted by Thornburg (2007). It was clear that, there was a varying level of understanding of information technology amongst the interviewees. This will impacts not only upon the individual, but also upon customers as well as the British High Commission visa teams to deliver good customer services that lead to service satisfaction.

The consumer surveys are key to capture of the customer perceptions on the services offered by the British High Commission (BHC). The respondents noted that there were no consumer surveys done by BHC regarding the services. The response could be linked to the fact the consumer surveys are periodically carried out through random sampling. It is also possible that the respondents were not part of the sample population at the time when such survey was carried out. The respondents valued the use of virtual services like innovation and technology, even though the effective use of such facilities and technology was not properly put into use as captured from the field. As noted by Chad and Pat (2009), the importance of virtual services crucial to the provision of services without necessarily being physically present.

The challenges on the use of technology like the video and teleconference facilities are not limited to the British High Commission (BHC) virtual services but general to all system related technology. Some of the failures in using the virtual meeting rooms as an example is to great extent failure of the clients to use the facilities from their end leading to the breakdown of communication form the end. The successful use of such facilities reduces the time taken in scheduling the physical meetings that are time consuming for fixing actual meeting as well as getting security clearance at the main entrance to the premises.

4.7 Customer Expectation

The respondents' views on the customer expectation are captured in frequency table below.

Table 4.5 customer expectation response

Response	Agree	% Strongly agree		Disagree	%	Strongly agree	%	Neutral	%	Total
Responsive to needs	10	9	2	1.8	99	89.2	0	0	0	0	111
Excess regulations	80	72.1	9	8.1	22	19.8	0	0	0	0	111
Static policies	100	90	4	3.6	07	6.3	0	0	0	0	111

98 % of the respondents disagreed that the use of video conferencing facilitates service delivery at the British High Commission (BHC). Though they agree that such facilities are expected to facilitate access to services and information sharing, they have instead become less helpful. The finding contradicts with Mullings (2002) that believes in customer service based on the consumer expectation. The use of social media by the by the High Commissioner in addressing some of the concerns does not respond to individual concerns but rather in general manner. The client expectation is not realised in the use of the telephone services. The same percent as video conferencing expressed concern for the failure of telephone services from the BHC end failing to meet the clients' needs. Most of the time the telephones are jammed and those that go through are not answered in satisfactory way.

Some of the respondents expressed concern on the manner they are handled by the staff while making enquiry of phone. 67 out of the 111 respondents confirmed having been told to hold on

telephone line while the staff was sorting other issues. It creates a negative picture when the background discussions are heard by the clients while asked to hold on the line. At the same the BHC staff fails to understand that they clients are using their credit when asked to hold on the telephone while sorting out other tasks before attending to the clients on phone.

Customers' expectations are key determinants of their consumption experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty. Accordingly, it is critical for marketers to try to find out in advance what their customers' expectations are, because a failure to meet or exceed those expectations could lead to dissatisfaction and defection. The respondents raised concern on absence of facilities for the physically challenged customers.

The United Kingdom (UK) Government, the Home office through the British High Commission ensures all UK visa applicants' detailed information is provided and confirmation of financial capability for maintenance while in the UK. However, the high requirement prohibits the potential emerging entrepreneurs from exhibiting their products at London exhibitions. The response of the respondents appears to create scenario as if it is the British High Commission that sets this requirements. These requirements are set in the Home office and it applies across all the foreign missions across the world.

4.8 Customer satisfaction

The respondents' views on customer satisfaction are captured in frequency table 4.6

Table 4.6 Customer satisfaction response

Response	Agree	%	Strongly agree	%	Disagree	Strongly disagree	%	Neutral	%	Total
Responsive to needs	10	9	2	1.8	99	0	0	0	0	111
Excess regulations	80	72.1	9	8.1	21	0	0	1	0.9	111
Static policies	103	92.8	0	0	08	0	0	0	0	111

A total of 99 of the respondents disagreed that the British High Commission is responsive to the needs of the clients. Out the 99 responses, 10 are physically challenged and they found that there is no consideration for facilities like ramps that can offer comfort for the clients in such conditions. The expectation of such customers is thus not fully met. The finding collaborates with Bassey (2011) who argues that the level of satisfaction is linked to the kind of expectation of customers and the actual service received. While taking biometric details, the physically challenged are meant to follow the queue just like the other able clients. This category of clients expects special considerations which is normally not the case. 30 of the 89 respondents have been at one time denied the visa on the basis of not providing the details of their grandparents on the visa application form. Some of the visa applicants have no information of the grandparents' details required in the visa applications forms. Such required information causes frustration to the applicants. The large amount of money required in the bank account complicates the small scale business individuals whose travel intention is business related agenda. Over 100 small enterprises in agribusiness and textile industries expressed concern on the inconveniences experienced while applying for business visas. 10 of these 100 respondents received their visas two weeks after the 2014 London business exhibition event, thus denying them the opportunity to participate in the business event.

The long duration taken in processing the visas is at times as result of large number of applicants that submit their visa applications late when it is few days to the London business exhibition as the case in point in chapter three of this report. The duration taken in processing of visas affect the level of satisfaction derived by customers. In some cases the delays are caused by missing information on the application forms. Though the staff receiving the visa forms needs to check and confirm that all the details are well captured. However, it is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that all the required information and detailed are well captured. If this is observed, then there will be few cases of delayed visa processing because of missing information.

V.   SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of major findings
5.1.1 Front Office Services

There were 10 respondents that reported errors on their visa documents and 101 agreed on the accuracy of documents in visa processing. The correction of the errors takes time and costly in transport and time for customers in making appointment to the British High Commission. Majority of respondents acknowledged inconsistence information from the back office on the visa processing. No clarity on the process after moving some

of the visa processing procedures from Nairobi to Pretoria in South Africa. There was no individual staff that would be dedicated to providing response and update to specific client after visa application is made to the office. According to respondents, there was no flexibility at the British High Commission in the service provision irrespective of the status of the visa applicants, for example the physically challenged make queue just like other able persons.

5.1.2 Back Office Services

There was poor level of coordination and communication by the front office. The response is a reflection of the security officers at the pedestrian gate who are the first face of the British High Commission. The security team appeared not fully informed on the visa application processes and requirements. There was a mismatch of information between the front office and the back office on visa application and processing. There were unnecessary inconveniences made by the visa staff by not honouring the appointment time with customers. They keep on re-scheduling the appointment even at a short notice. Such changes affect the planning of customers as it involves transport arrangements as well as security clearance.

5.1.3 Virtual Office Services

Regarding the virtual services, the respondents noted that they were not aware of consumer satisfaction surveys that offer opportunity for their feedback on the services offered. With the existence of virtual services, it is much easier for such perception surveys to be done through the web page and consumer money survey. The use of virtual services on technology is faced with connectivity challenges that can be improved with time. The incomplete information on the visa application greatly affects the finalisation of the visa. The delays experienced in the visa processing are therefore as a result of both the customers and the BHC staff in the visa department. A report generated from the consumer satisfaction surveys that outlines the improvement action plan could build level of confidence among the consumers.

5.1.4 Customer Expectations

Customers expect to attain the required services at the visa department on time. Most of the clients make their visa applications with objective of getting it on time so as to make their travel arrangements on time. The actual expectation on getting visa processed on time is at times contrary to the actual outcome of the process. Delays reflect the inconsistence on their understanding about the entire process. If the expectation is not made, then the customers feel that the actual service delivery is a deviation from the norm in their understanding. The actual outcome in the post evaluation of the service may influence the consumers to adjust their expectations based on the satisfaction derived. The service provider may also improve the services offered to comply with the customer expectations.

5.2 Conclusions

So far, throughout the literature and the actual findings, it becomes evident that customer service standards are required, as they assure quality and a framework for employees to work within. They also ensure that organisations can guarantee a service is delivered consistently in a uniform fashion. The front office may not fully be informed on the services that are offered in the different departments especially within the diplomatic mission like the British High Commission (BHC). Since the first contact of the front office are the security team and the reception team that is more concerned with the general overview of the mission rather than the specific details of each of the departments. The detailed information is attained from the respective department.

All the departments i.e. back office, front office and virtual services are important in the provision of visa services at the BHC. All departments collectively contribute to the customer expectations and the final satisfaction that may be either desirable or undesirable. Customer satisfaction is directly linked to the performance results that can be visible within the organisation. The process of achieving and satisfying the expectations of consumers is as important as the actual satisfaction derived from the services. Improvement to the service delivery should be the underlying principle in an organisation that learns from the past and consumer feedback.

5.3 Recommendations
5.3.1 Effect of back office services on customer satisfaction

The back office services needs to be well communicated to the customers on the respective roles and the services provided in each department. Clarity on the engagement of the specific back office and its related contribution to the visa processing should be clearly illustrated on the website as well as the pamphlet and brochures. The back office significantly contributes to the attainment of customer satisfaction through fulfilment of their expectation.

There is need for annual open days within the BHC that creates opportunity for the mission staff to engage with the local public regarding the visa services offered and other related services that are available. This creates awareness and understanding on the visa application process as well as confidence building among the clients in making their requests.

5.3.2 Front office services on customer satisfaction

Create a friendly security and informed team at the main entrance is helpful in providing the required information on the visa processing services. The security team should not have knowledge limited to the issues in their domain. More understanding improves their a awareness on the visa services as well as other services provided by the British High Commission in Nairobi. A detailed pamphlet can be printed in hard copies for the visiting customers to read through on the processes involved as well as posting the same on the website in simple and clear language for easy understanding. The relationship between the Pretoria office in South Africa and the Nairobi office at the BHC should be demystified for proper understanding on the roles of each office in visa processing.

5.3.3 Virtual service on customer satisfaction

Well motivated staff in virtual service contributes to effective response to clients needs. All the visa departments cultivate room for the effective service among the staff and pro-activeness in service provision. The use of civil service procedures is good though more discretion by the staff on case

by case is important in cases like the physically challenged customers as well as urgent requests for visa application. The motivation for staff could not necessarily be monetary but other benefits like equality between the United Kingdom based staff working at the High Commission and the locally engaged staff on a number of areas like maternity benefits of nine months leave and further education sponsorship aimed at improving the staff capacity.

5.3.4 Customer service expectations on their satisfaction

A systematic perception survey for the services in a periodic time frame should be initiated. The survey report should identify the areas of weakness and improvement plan to be in place, including the duration that the action points should be addressed. This creates confidence in the public due to the perception that their concerns are addressed.

5.4 Recommendation for future research and identified gaps in the study

There is need for front office service review on its role in the visa service processing with emphasis on securitisation of the service through the armed private security service officers standing at the main entrance as well as within the compound of British High Commission. The review should demystify the relationship between the security services and the actual primary role of front office services. The current operation gives the power to security team to deny entry to the compound even for clarification and seeking enquiries from the visa processing staff.

The study could not reach all the target population because of the different geographical location. The sampled respondents cannot generally be used to show the perception of all the past customers of the British High Commission. The study did also not consider the environment and the specific time when the visa application were sought by customers. Some of the visa delays could be linked to the period of terror attacks in Kenya. For security reasons, the details of applicants had to be checked thoroughly to ensure they were not terror suspects flying out of Kenya.

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