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# Measuring and achieving quality customer service: a study on public sector in Malaysia

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**Measuring and Achieving Quality Customer Service:  
A Study on Public Sector in Malaysia.**

**By:**

**Muhammad Hafiz Abd. Rashid**

**A thesis submitted to the:**

**School of Hospitality and Service Management,  
Rochester Institute of Technology,  
Rochester, New York.**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Service Leadership and Innovation**

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**ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**  
**Department of Hospitality and Service Management**  
**Graduate Studies**

**M.S. Service Leadership and Innovation**  
**Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings**

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## **Abstract**

Excellent quality of customer service is so important for government agencies even though they are not-for-profit. Better service enhances productivity, and treating customer right the first time saves time and money. Creating satisfied customers reduces the likelihood irate citizens take their complaints to higher sources, or to a public forum where negative word-of-mouth can be damaging. A common criticism of the public in Malaysia has been the poor quality of customer service rendered by employees in government agencies. As the largest organization in Malaysia, the quality of service they provide has a tremendous influence on public perceptions of the quality of public service. A study was, therefore, performed to measure the quality of customer service provided by public agencies in Malaysia. Focus was given to the Road Transport Department as this study could not cater to all departments throughout the government agencies. One hundred respondents who experienced interactions with this department were chosen to participate in this study. They were required to answer online questionnaires and expressed their feedback regarding the quality of customer service this department provided. The result demonstrated that most of the respondents were unsatisfied with the quality of Customer Service Representatives, facilities, procedure/policies, and the atmosphere of the department itself. Recommendations that were discussed in the study are: sending employee for training, supervisor as a role model, to eliminate bureaucracy, improve facilities (counters, seats, telephone systems, and waiting area), and improve hiring processes.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Study

### I. Introduction and Background

Quality customer service has become among the hottest and most pressing issues discussed and pursued in the public and corporate arena. This stems from the undeniable fact that today's customers are increasingly sophisticated and quality conscious. They want service and value they can depend on and they don't want to spend a lot of time looking for it. The "quality service" ingredient is no longer an advantage, like it used to be. It has become a necessity for the survival of the fittest amongst fierce competition. It is clear now that organizations who maintain a strong and consuming passion and zeal for customers overcome any barriers encountered and succeed in the marketplace. The voice of the customer provides the only true direction for any organization. Indeed, in the long run, people do not buy from companies who do not go "the extra-mile" in looking after their customers. (Teh, 2007)

Over the past two decades, the theory and practice of customer service quality has received considerable attention from academics and practitioners alike. Viewed as a means by which customers distinguish between competing organizations, customer service quality is known to contribute to market share and customer satisfaction. Thus, the pursuit of quality customer services in both private and public sector organizations is driven by the need to survive and remain competitive. (Agus, Barker & Kandampully, 2007)

As with most “new” management practices, private sector organizations have adopted the principles of quality customer service at a much faster rate than those in the public sector. This can be attributed to the inherent differences between the sectors in terms of their historical and environmental contexts. In particular, the primary objective of most public sector organizations is to provide a social benefit within a limited budget and reduce costs. This is in direct contradiction to private sector organizations whose primary focus is on increasing profits. It is not surprising, therefore, that private sector organizations have higher productivity and profitability than public sector organizations. (Agus, Barker & Kandampully, 2007)

The slow uptake of customer service practices in public sector organizations is further exacerbated by difficulties in measuring outcomes, greater scrutiny from the public and press, a lack of freedom to act in an arbitrary fashion, and a requirement for decisions to be based in law. Irrespective of these difficulties, however, public sector organizations have come under increasing pressure to deliver quality customer services, improve efficiencies, and respond to government legislation.

By looking at the overall perspectives, this study is conducted to measure the quality of customer service the public sector agencies and provide recommendations where improvements can be made. This study focuses on Road Transport Department in particular. The department was chosen because they interact with a lot of people/customer every day.

## **II. Problem Statement**

It is every employee's responsibility to demonstrate good customer service, but especially critical for those who have day-to-day contact with the public. As the largest organization in Malaysia, the quality of customer service government agencies provide has a tremendous influence on public perceptions of the quality of the public service. Therefore, this study is attempting to answer the following questions:

- To examine method, frequency and purpose of contact with public sector agencies.
- What is the level of customer service quality provided by public sector agencies in Malaysia (specifically in the Road Transport Department)?
- To recommend area(s) for improvement.

## **III. The Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to understand the public's satisfaction level and to examine the perception of poor customer service quality public agencies render in Malaysia (specifically in the Road Transport Department).

## **IV. Hypothesis**

The thesis is designed to test the hypothesis that government agencies in Malaysia render poor quality of customer service. This is evident in the large number of complaints received from the public and their negative perception towards the government agencies.

## **V. The Objectives of the Study**

There are three main objectives that this study addresses, and they are:

- To identify the method, frequency, and purpose of contact with public sector agencies.
- To measure customer service quality public sector agencies provide.
- To recommend area(s) that requires improvement.

## **VI. Scope of the Study**

The area of the study is customer service quality in public sector agencies. It's focused on the dimensions of customer service quality from customer perspectives particularly in the Road Transport Department. This study cannot be conducted on other public agencies as this requires broader evaluations as well as some limitations such as time and funds. The sample used for this study was 100 customers who interacted with the Road Transport Department.

## **VII. The Importance of Study**

The outcome of the study will be useful for the public sector agencies to help improve customer service quality. Results of the improvement effort also benefit the public. In the long run, this study may be used as a reference for evaluating customer service quality in the public sector.

## **VIII. Methodology**

An online questionnaire was developed using Easy Form Creator with surveymonkey.com as the host. The questionnaire was developed to focus on the demographics, method, purpose and frequency of contact, quality of Customer Service Representatives, and quality of customer service experience. The questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to 100 respondents who had experience interacting with the Road Transport Department. Finally, all data is readily available in a CSV format for statistical analysis.

The first chapter provides the introduction and background of the research. The second chapter discusses the relevant customer service quality literature. The third chapter elaborates the methodology used in the study. The results are presented in the chapter four and finally the fifth chapter drawn conclusions and suggestions to be considered by the public sector agencies. The suggestions made were purposely to help the public sector agencies to continuously improve the quality of customer service.

## **Chapter 2 – The Literature Review**

### **I. Introduction**

It is estimated that it costs five to ten times as much to gain a new customer as it does to keep a current customer. Every business must remember each and every customer is an asset and it takes effort to ensure quality in customer service.

One of the main objectives of a customer service function is to provide and maintain customer satisfaction. In organizations such as Ritz-Carlton and Wegmans, the relationship between the organization and the customer is strong and lasting. Developing a reputation of excellent customer service requires a commitment to service throughout the organization that is consistent over time. Satisfied customers may not remain satisfied forever. Employees can provide the fresh perspective and creativity they gain from interacting with customers every day. They see – and can pass on – ways to accomplish tasks better, faster, cheaper, and easier because they are so closely involved in the daily process of delighting customers. (Cook, 2002)

### **II. Definition of Customer Service**

In simple terms, customer service means figuring out what each customer needs then keeping your customer happy. It is not enough to simply expect because they buy your product they are loyal or satisfied. Customer service can be as simple as answering questions and providing information. It can be as complex as tracking customer habits and anticipating needs. (Zeithaml, Parasaraman & Berry, 1990)

*Customer service* (also known as Client Service) is the provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase. According to Wikipedia (2007), “Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling a product or service has met the customer expectation.” Its importance varies by product, industry, and customer. As an example, an expert customer might require less pre-purchase service (i.e., advice) than a novice. In many cases, customer service is more important if the purchase relates to a “service” as opposed to a “product”. Customer service may be provided by a person (e.g., sales and service representative), or by automated means called self-service. Examples of self service are Internet sites. Customer service is normally an integral part of a company’s customer value proposition. The quality and level of customer service has decreased in recent years. This can be attributed to a lack of support or understanding at the executive and middle management levels of a corporation. (Wikipedia, 2007)

Customer service has strategic importance (Dean & Terziovski, 2000) and requires companies to continually enhance customer experience and satisfaction, to deliver quality in a competitive marketplace (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). *Customer service* refers to the processes and actions making it easier for customers to do business with a company (Kotler, 2000).

Some authors view customer service as all activities which bind a corporation and its customers together to further a sales relationship. Other authors view customer service as a package of measurable activities which provide utility to customers or



optimum levels of service. (Disend, 1991) According to Dr. Leonard Berry (1999) of Texas A & M University, customers evaluate service based on five factors:

- **Reliability** - The ability to provide what was promised dependably and accurately.
- **Assurance** - The knowledge and courtesy you show to customers and your ability to convey trust, competence, and confidence.
- **Tangibles** - The physical facilities, equipment, and your appearance.
- **Empathy** - The degree of caring and individual attention you show customers.
- **Responsiveness** - The willingness to help customers promptly. (Zeithaml, Parasaraman & Berry, 1990, p. 15)

According to Disend (1991), there are two views of customer service. He did a comparison between the traditional service approach and customer-focused approach.

**Table 1: Two views of customer service.**

<b>The traditional approach to service.</b>	<b>The customer-focused approach to service.</b>
Good service is the absence of unsatisfied customers.	Service means providing more than customers expect. It's also turning unhappy customers into satisfied customers.
Customer service primarily involves how you interact with customers in	Service involves every aspect of the business: the products and services

<p><b>The traditional approach to service.</b></p>	<p><b>The customer-focused approach to service.</b></p>
<p>person, on the phone, smiling, being nice, and resolving customer problems or complaints.</p>	<p>offered, delivery, and follow up. It also includes all the behind-the-scenes activities in finance, data processing, purchasing, warehousing, and personnel affecting how the organization produces and delivers its products and services.</p>
<p>Customer service is primarily the responsibility of the Customer Service Department or other designated people. Often heard as, "I have my own work to do. Taking care of customers is somebody else's job."</p>	<p>Satisfying customers is the #1 priority of every employee, from the CEO down. It's too important to be delegated to a few people or departments. Everyone believes, "I'm it! I'm personally responsible for the quality and service our customers get."</p>
<p>Customer service is a program. It's something you do or something you send people to for a few days.</p>	<p>Customer service isn't a program or a set of skills. It's not something to send people to or a concept to get excited about for a few weeks. It's an attitude, an obsession, a way of life, an ongoing process.</p>

<p><b>The traditional approach to service.</b></p>	<p><b>The customer-focused approach to service.</b></p>
<p>The organization comes first. The most important people are (in order) executives, managers, supervisors, front line employees, stockholders, and customers.</p>	<p>The customer comes first. The most important people are customers.</p>
<p>Customer service is for customers—people or organizations outside the company.</p>	<p>Every employee and department has both internal and external customers. Everyone lives by the belief, “If you’re not serving the customer, you’d better be serving someone who is.”</p>
<p>Customer complaints represent failure and are to be avoided; discouraged. Customer complaints and problems are an irritant, something to be “handled”. The emphasis is often on taking care of it at the time, placating customers, and not making bad situations worse. Often the same problems and complaints recur because the organization does nothing to</p>	<p>Customer complaints are welcomed, even encouraged. They are an opportunity to learn from customers, uncover weak areas, and correct these. The emphasis is on resolving problems to the customer’s satisfaction to keep the customer. The organization often overreacts to resolve problems and maintain customer goodwill.</p>

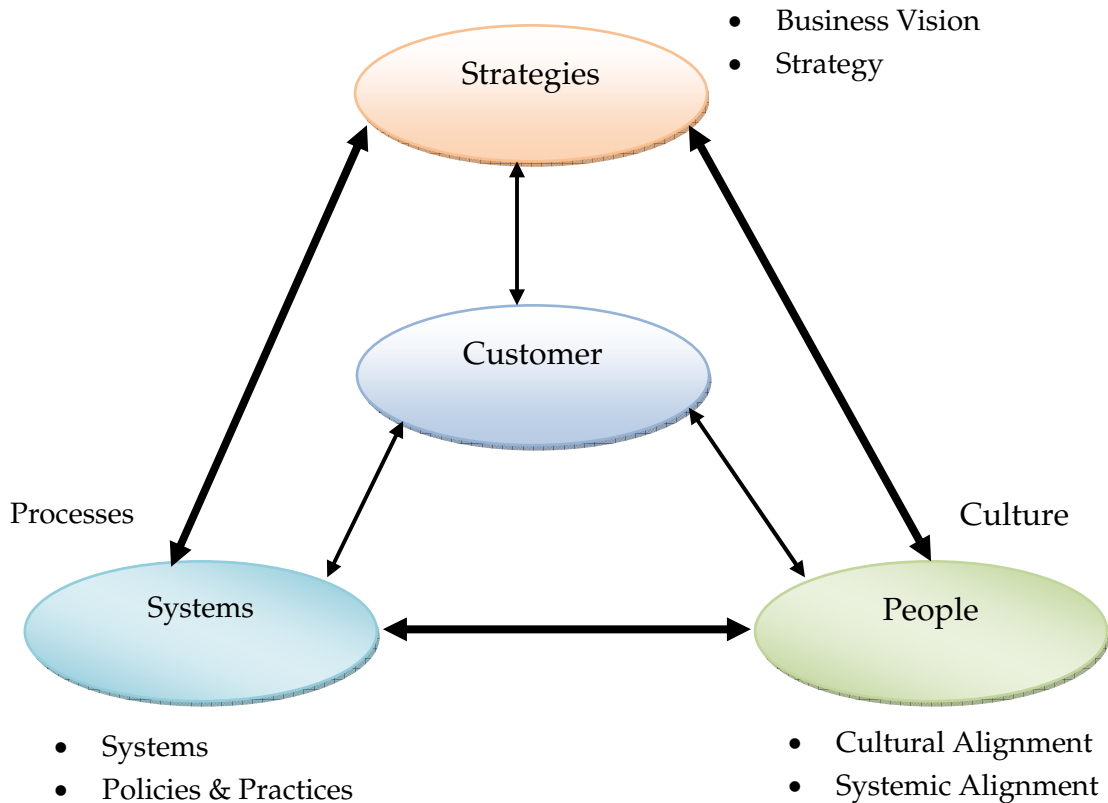
<b>The traditional approach to service.</b>	<b>The customer-focused approach to service.</b>
correct them.	
People who have direct customer contact at the front lines are the lowest paid, least skilled, and least motivated employees. They get the least training and have the highest turnover.	The people at the front line are the company. The organization defines the experience, skills, and temperament required for customer contact positions. They hire people who are empathetic, caring, and intelligent. They train them diligently and reward them well for performance.
Customer service training emphasizes skills, how-tos (“If the customer says or does this, you say or do that”). It’s often called “smile training” or “charm school.”	The emphasis in all training is on developing confidence and self-esteem first. People also learn to see customers and the organization from a different perspective. Social skills are a hiring issue, not a training issue. Job-specific knowledge and skills build competence and confidence.

*Source: Disend 1991, p. 19.*

### III. Customer Service Triangle

According to Armistead and Clark (1994), Albrecht and Zemke developed a customer service triangle.

**Figure 1: Customer service triangle.**



*Source: Armistead and Clark, 1994, p. 14 (from Albrecht and Zemke).*

The customer is at the center of this triangle as every activity must be seen in its impact on customer satisfaction; understanding how the customer views the organization's performance rather than accepting internal view. The following points illustrate how a customer service organization can apply practices and principles to the service triangle.

- **Strategies** – The Customer Service Manager must develop realistic statements about the role of support, the way it is to be measured, and the priorities for improvement. The strategy must express the value of service to the customer and identify those aspects that create a competitive advantage for the organization. It must be said that a strategy is not a wish list but a fully resourced statement of intent.
- **Systems** – Having clarified the strategy, the systems employed by the customer service organization must be reviewed in light of any changes in content or emphasis in the service task. Systems to control quality, information, materials, and productivity are included here. A principle to be observed is to ensure key measures have significant impact on customer satisfaction. For example, response time is consistently achieved because the system has sufficient capacity to do so.
- **People** – The people are those who deliver the customer service. They are more effective if they are aware of the scope of the task. This can be achieved through a consistent customer service strategy. They are committed to it if they have had the opportunity to contribute to its formulation. The customer service providers are also more effective if the systems used help rather than prevent service. (Armistead & Clark, 1994, p. 14)

#### **IV. Customer Service Ethics**

According to Ward (2008), good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy – happy enough to pass positive feedback about your business along to others, who may then try the product or service you offer

for themselves, and on their turn become repeat customers. If you truly want to have good customer service, all you have to do is ensure that your business consistently does these things:

- *Answer your phone.*

Get call forwarding or an answering service. Hire staff if you need to, but make sure someone is picking up the phone when someone calls your business. People who call want to talk to a live person, not a “fake recorded robot”.

- *Don't make promises unless you will keep them.*

Not plan to keep them, but keep them. Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception. If you say, “Your new bedroom furniture will be delivered on Tuesday”, make sure it is delivered on Tuesday. Otherwise, don't say it. The same rule applies to client appointments, deadlines, etc. Think before you give any promise – because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.

- *Listen to your customers.*

Is there anything more exasperating than telling someone what you want or what your problem is then discovering the person hasn't been paying attention and needs to have it explained again? Let your customer talk and show him that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.

- *Deal with complaints.*

No one likes hearing complaints, and many of us have developed a reflex shrug, saying, “You can’t please all the people all the time”. Maybe not, but if you give the complaint your attention, you may be able to please this one person this one time - and position your business to reap the benefits of good customer service.

- *Train your staff to be always helpful, courteous, and knowledgeable.*

Do it yourself or hire someone to train them. Talk to them about good customer service and what it is (and isn’t) regularly. Most importantly, give every member of your staff enough information and power to make those small customer-pleasing decisions, so he never has to say, “I don’t know, but so-and-so will be back at...”

- *Take the extra step.*

For instance, if someone walks into your store and asks you to help them find something, don’t just say, “It’s in Aisle 3.” Lead the customer to the item. Better yet, wait and see if he has questions about it, or further needs. Whatever the extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service, take it. They may not say so to you, but people notice when people make an extra effort and will tell other people.

- *Throw in something extra.*

Whether it’s a coupon for a future discount, additional information on how to use the product, or a genuine smile, people love to get more than they thought they were getting. And don’t think that a gesture has to be large to be effective. The local art framer we use attaches a package of picture hangers to every picture he frames.



A small thing, but so appreciated. (Ward, 2008, <http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/customerservice/a/custservrules.htm>)

## **V. Customer Service Representative**

According to US Department of Labor (2007), Customer Service Representatives are employed by many different types of companies throughout the country to serve as a direct point of contact for customers. They are responsible for ensuring that their company's customers receive an adequate level of service or help with their questions and concerns. These customers may be individual consumers or other companies, and the nature of their service needs can vary considerably.

All Customer Service Representatives interact with customers to provide information in response to inquiries about products or services and to handle and resolve complaints. They communicate with customers through a variety of means - in person; by telephone, e-mail or regular mail correspondence, or fax, or even over the Internet. Some Customer Service Representatives handle general questions and complaints, whereas others specialize in a particular area.

Many customer inquiries involve routine questions and requests. For example, Customer Service Representatives may be asked to provide a customer with a bank account balance, or to check on the status of an order that has been placed. Obtaining the answers to such questions usually requires simply looking up information on their computer. Other questions are more involved, and may call for additional research or further explanation on the part of the Customer Service Representative. In handling

customers' complaints, Customer Service Representatives must attempt to resolve the problem according to guidelines established by the company. These procedures may involve asking questions to determine the validity of a complaint, offering possible solutions, or providing customers with refunds, exchanges, or other offers such as discounts or coupons. In some cases, Customer Service Representatives are required to follow up with an individual customer until a question is answered or an issue is resolved.

Some Customer Service Representatives help people decide what types of products or services would best suit their needs. They may even aid customers in completing purchases or transactions. Although the primary function of Customer Service Representatives is not sales, some may spend a part of their time with customers attempting to convince them to purchase additional products or services. Customer Service Representatives may also make changes or updates to a customer's profile or account information. They may keep records of transactions and update and maintain databases of information.

Most Customer Service Representatives use computers and telephones extensively in their work. Customer service representatives frequently enter information into a computer as they are speaking to customers. Often, companies have large amounts of data, such as account information, that can be pulled up on a computer screen while the representative is talking to a customer so that he or she can answer specific questions relating to the account. Customer Service Representatives also

may have access to information such as answers to the most common customer questions, or guidelines for dealing with complaints. In the event they encounter a question or situation in which they do not know how to respond, workers consult with a Supervisor to determine the best course of action. Customer Service Representatives use multi-line telephones systems, which often route calls directly to the most appropriate representative. However, at times, a Customer Service Representative needs to transfer a call to someone who may be better able to respond to the customer's needs.

In some organizations, Customer Service Representatives spend their entire day on the telephone. In others, they may spend part of their day answering e-mails and the remainder of the day taking calls. For some, most of their contact with the customer is face to face. Customer Service Representatives need to remain aware of the amount of time spent with each customer to fairly distribute their time among the people who require their assistance. This is particularly important for Customer Service Representatives whose primary activities are answering telephone calls; often it is required to keep conversations to a set time limit. For Customer Service Representatives working in Call Centers, there is usually very little time between telephone calls. As soon as they have finished with one call, they must immediately move on to another. When working in Call Centers, Customer Service Representatives are likely to be under close supervision. Telephone calls may be taped and reviewed by Supervisors to ensure company policies and procedures are being followed, or a Supervisor may listen in on conversations.

Job responsibilities can differ, depending on the industry in which a Customer Service Representative is employed. For example, a Customer Service Representative working in the branch office of a bank may assume the responsibilities of other workers, such as Teller or new Account Clerk, as needed. In insurance agencies, a Customer Service Representative interacts with agents, insurance companies, and policyholders. These workers handle much of the paperwork related to insurance policies, such as policy applications and changes and renewals to existing policies. They answer questions regarding issues such as policy coverage, help with reporting claims, and do anything else that may need to be done. Although they must know as much as insurance agents about insurance products, and usually must have credentials equal to those of an agent to sell products and make changes to policies, the duties of a Customer Service Representative differ from those of an agent in that Customer Service Representatives are not responsible for actively seeking potential customers. Customer Service Representatives employed by communications and utilities companies assist individuals interested in opening accounts for various utilities such as electricity and gas, or for communication services such as cable television and telephone. They explain various options and receive orders for services to be installed, turned on, turned off, or changed. They may also look into and resolve complaints about billing and service provided by telephone, cable television, and utility companies. (Job Bank USA, 2008)

Although Customer Service Representatives work in a variety of settings, most work in areas that are clean and well lit. Many work in Call Centers where workers generally have their own workstation or cubicle space equipped with a telephone,

headset, and computer. Since many Call Centers are open extended hours, beyond the traditional work day, or are staffed around the clock, these positions may require workers to take on early morning, evening, or late night shifts. Weekend or holiday work also may be necessary. As a result, the occupation is well-suited to flexible work schedules. About 17 percent of Customer Service Representatives work part time. (US Department of Labor, 2007) The occupation also offers the opportunity for seasonal work in certain industries, often through temporary help agencies.

Call Centers may be crowded and noisy, and work may be repetitious and stressful, with little time between calls. Workers usually must attempt to minimize the length of each call, while still providing excellent service. To ensure these procedures are followed, conversations may be monitored by Supervisors, which are stressful. Also, long periods spent sitting, typing, or looking at a computer screen may cause eye and muscle strain, backaches, headaches, and repetitive motion injuries.

Customer Service Representatives working outside of a Call Center environment may interact with customers through several different means. For example, workers employed by an insurance agency or in a grocery store may have customers approach them in person or contact them by telephone, computer, mail, or fax. Many of these Customer Service Representatives work a standard 40-hour week; however, their hours generally depend on their employer's hours of operation. Work environments outside of a Call Center also vary accordingly. Most Customer Service Representatives work either in an office or at a service or help desk.

Customer Service Representatives may have to deal with difficult or irate customers, which can be challenging. However, the ability to resolve customers' problems has the potential to be very rewarding. (US Department of Labor, 2007)

## **VI. Measuring Quality of Customer Service**

Good customer service may be seen as a crucial asset for most organizations. But how do we know we are delivering good customer service and, more importantly, delivering it to meet and exceed your customer's expectations? Customer service is an intangible thing; it is perishable and it is personal so measuring it can be complicated and less than straightforward.

Most companies measure success by their sales numbers. If sales continue to increase, then business must be growing. However, one small detail is overlooked - the customer. (Saxby, 2007) Long-term profitability in a changing market is not solely the result of increased sales; it's more about determining the needs of the customers then meeting those needs. If we can't measure customer service at our business, then we can't manage it. Companies everywhere talk about the importance of providing excellent customer service. They go on and on about how Internet technology has changed the playing field for the sale of products and services, that it has increased competition between companies vying for the same customer. Often the only thing separating one business from its competitors is the level of service provided. (Saxby, 2007)

Research has shown that it takes up to six times the investment to acquire a new customer than to keep an existing customer. (Saxby, 2007) So wouldn't it make sense to measure what our customers think so we can maximize our investment? If customer service is the only thing separating us from our competition, wouldn't it make sense to measure the level of service we provide? Here are a few ideas on how to measure the quality of customer service.

- *Create a survey for your customers to complete.*

Ask them to rate past experiences with the company and include questions about particular areas, such as over-the-phone and online service, speed of response, attitude of the employees and satisfaction with the solutions offered. This helps you decide what to do in the future when a customer complains. Survey might be done in few ways:

- *Survey the customers by direct mail:* Send out an easy-to-understand questionnaire immediately after they have purchased either our product or service. They should only have to take one to two minutes to complete the questionnaire and it should come with a postage-paid return envelope. A simple letter explaining how important customer feedback is to our company should accompany the survey. If possible, provide something free as a small thank you for the time they take to answer the questions. (Saxby, 2007)
- *Survey the customers via e-mail:* E-mail your customers an online survey to obtain their feedback. There are numerous online surveys available that are

inexpensive, easy to use and compile the results for us. Use this feedback from our customers before we change or implement a new product or service. Develop a core group of customers that become our source of feedback for future changes. (Saxby, 2007)

- **Use call monitoring** to measure the type of customer service our company is already providing. Call monitoring refers to a third person (usually somebody in management or personnel) listening in during a conversation between a Customer Service Representative and a customer calling with a complaint. Consultants are sometimes used to monitor these calls then provide training. (Saxby, 2007)
- **Telephone surveys.** Many companies in the service sectors use telephone interviews as a means of gaining first-hand feedback on customer's experiences. For example, Kwik-Fit Customer Services Department telephones at random 100 customers per month to check on customer satisfaction. BT interviews 13,000 business customers each month to check that they are satisfied with the service. The advantage of this method is it allows an immediate response from customers in a short space of time. It is also a useful PR experience for the company undertaking the survey, which can be effected at a relatively low cost. The major disadvantage of telephone interviewing is the invasion of privacy. How the call is introduced often determines whether the customer gives the caller his or her time. It is also difficult to conduct a lengthy interview with customers. Some customers may also find it difficult to answer scalar questions or to give considered response if caught 'on the hop'. Likewise, the telephone clearly cannot be used in a visual manner. (Cook, 2002)



- *Customer service focus group.* According to Cook (2002), a powerful technique in allowing members of Staff and Management to gain first-hand feedback from customers is the development of customer service focus group. Focus groups are useful for gaining insights into customers' attitudes and behavior. There are two types of customer service focus groups:
  - *Physical focus group.* This is done by inviting customers to attend an informal gathering at the service provider's premises to express their opinions on the quality of customer service provided. The employees of the organization often attend the meeting to hear customer's views. Such groups have been successfully applied by organizations as diverse as British Telecom, Boots, Nationwide Building Society and Safeway. In Hewlett-Packard, after they held its first customer focus group, participants were invited in to see what had been done as a result of their suggestions. The goal was to demonstrate that HP is serious about taking action on the issues that participants had raised. The benefits of focus group are that they provide a more in-depth and qualitative feel about what customers say about the service.
  - *Online focus group.* Experiments show open discussions on the web about service conducted among an organization's customer base can often be more fruitful than those which are carried out face-to-face. People in the electronic focus groups which were monitored as part of this research, tended to:
    - Talk more frankly and more often.

- Have equal share of remarks to contribute (in face-to-face focus groups, one or two can sometimes dominate the discussion).
  - Make more suggestions and proposals for improvements.
- *Conduct an online search* to see whether there are customer service complaints against our company. Customers who can't get a satisfactory answer through our company will likely go online to complain in forums or websites such as the Better Business Bureau. One or two complaints can indicate a fluke in the system. If we find many complaints by different individuals, it may be a sign that there is a serious problem with the system. (Saxby, 2007)
- *Free phone.* A technique which is growing in popularity is free customer phone lines. This is an idea which was first started by companies such as P&G and is said to be the most popular means there of gaining feedback from customers. In the UK, this technique is now being used by organization such as Coca-Cola, American Express and Burger King. At Burger King Restaurant customers wishing to comment on any aspect of the service in their outlets phone a designated number free of charge. Petrol retailer Shell has established a Shell customer service center free enquiry service. A leaflet at all Shell stations advertises for “enquiries, complaints, compliments and anything you want to know about Shell”. Set to grow popularity, free phone care lines should be an enhancement of, not a replacement for, customer enquiries or complaint processes. Proper training needs to be provided to staff answering the calls as a poor telephone response can in fact do more harm than good for the organization. (Cook, 2002)

- *Mystery shop:* Hire a mystery shopping company (a company who hires people to pose as customers) to visit or contact our business and browse through our Web site. These companies have the ability to see our business through the eyes of our customers. It's as if our customers were providing us with a report card on our business. These results give us the feedback necessary to know what is and is not working from the customer's point of view. Mystery shopping uncovers the areas that need the most improvement. These findings help us identify the skills our staff needs to exceed customers' expectations. Mystery shopping can be the measuring stick to monitor customer service and sales levels through the eyes of our customers. (Saxby, 2007)

In summary, there are numerous methods to measure the quality of customer service. Public agencies should implement the one that can produce accurate result. This will help to identify the current level of customer service and area(s) to be improved. They need to conduct 'need assessment' review before choosing the most appropriate method. This can avoid from choosing the wrong method. Most importantly, the method chosen should be parallel with the current organization needs and will give benefits in a long run.

## **VII. Why Customer Service is Poor in the Public Sector.**

According to Disend (1991), the reasons concerning why service is so poor in the public sector are as follows:

- *Lack of competition and profit motive.*

The argument here is there's no reason for most public sector employees to provide good customer service because there's no profit incentive and often no threat of competition. Without the fear of bankruptcy, damaged reputation, competition, loss of market share, or other factors to threaten their continued existence, there's very little to influence the level of service provided in most agencies.

- *Few rewards for risk-taking or successes; negative consequences for failures.*

The norm appears to be: "Do only what's expected, whatever is the minimum required." There's no incentive or reason to do more than what's expected or to do things differently. Doing so often results in negative consequences. Changing things or being noticed is often not part of the culture. Improving productivity or cutting costs doesn't mean much at salary reviews if people are locked into civil service raises. Bright-eyed, energetic, idealistic newcomers quickly learn the culture and conform to the norm. Of course, there are a few champions, but most employees realize it's easier and better for their careers if they go along with the norm rather than rock the boat. Taking more risks implies more failures. Many public sector organizations and employees believe that their public trust prevents them from trying anything new or different because it might not work out. And many employees are more concerned with covering their rears if things go wrong than with trying anything new.

- *Excessive size and bureaucracy.*

The larger and more complex the organization, the worse the service. As in the private sector, the more levels between the “customer” and the executives, the slower and more impersonal the service, and the more room for errors. Government agencies are notorious for their size and their bureaucratic procedures. Because of politics, turf-guarding, multilevel reviews, numerous revisions, and complicated approval processes, decisions take longer. Most things must be done in triplicate and require multiple signatures.

- *Low pay scales.*

Both government and non-profit organizations typically pay less than do organizations in the private sector. Many critics say that they can't get good people for the money they pay and they're often stuck with people they'd like to get rid of. All of this combines to create a culture in which employees, especially those who have most frequent contact with “customers,” are low paid, poorly trained, and rule-bound. They are encouraged not to rock the boat or try new things, are rarely rewarded for exceptional service, see little chance for rapid advancement or money, and are frequently frustrated by excessive delays and approval cycles. They often feel like cogs in a massive machine – unnoticed, unappreciated, and unchallenged. Since customer relations mirrors employee relations, it's no wonder many public sector organizations provide such poor service. Both customers and employees have come to expect it. In the private sector, many service-oriented organizations help shape customers' expectations of good service. Companies like IBM, Federal Express, Maytag, 3M, and others do this by continuously telling customers and

potential customers what they can expect and how good their service is. They also deliver what they promise. Most government agencies, utilities, and non-profit organizations don't do this. They do nothing to remind customers about their service or to change customer's expectations about service. They often fail to deliver what they promise. As a result, customers don't think about what these organizations do well; they only think about what they don't do – or how they mess things up. Customers come to expect slow, inept, uncaring service. The expression “Close enough for government work” captures these feelings. (Disend, 1991, p.283)

In summary, there is variety of factors contributing to the poor quality of customer service in public sector. Top management should be aware of this and change should be done. Most of the public servants are lack of motivation. They need to be recognized for their contributions. Reward system needs to be improved and employees who go extra-miles should be rewarded. Employees who give excellent customer service should be a role model. Bureaucracy need to be eliminated to ease their task. Sometimes they face difficulties in resolving customers' issues just because of bureaucracy or multi-level approval policies.

### **VIII. Customer Service in Malaysian Public Sector**

In the early years of independence, the orientation was towards expanding the range of goods and services offered to the people through institution building, resulting in the expansion of the civil service to take on the responsibility for development. The main thrust behind administrative reform efforts thereafter was to upgrade

administrative institutions to promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness towards attaining national developmental goals.

The rapid transformation of the country into a modern nation state led to major societal changes. Better education and growing affluence led to greater needs and demands for public goods and services to which the system had to respond quickly and adequately. The large civil service and the consequent increase in public expenditure soon became the prime target of criticism. (Abdul Karim, 2004) The growing bureaucratization was blamed for the increase in red tape and inefficient management of public expenditure.

Since independence in 1957, public sector reform has been a part of the Government's agenda in Malaysia. In the 1980's reform revolved around the need to improve the quality of public sector management and to shift the responsibility for economic development to the private sector. To improve the quality of service offered by public sector agencies to clients at the "service" counter, the Government took several measures to improve existing procedures and systems, introduced office automation and information technology to strengthen information and service delivery, and enhanced the capacity of district administration. Realizing values and ethics are critical for the provision of "quality" customer service; the Government launched several programs to inculcate desirable values, such as honesty, discipline, integrity, dedication, accountability, trustworthiness and efficiency among the public servants. The administrative reforms of the nineties were guided by the underlying philosophy of

quality, with emphasis on administrative improvements, enhancement of information technology, improvement of information, and service delivery. (Abdul Karim, 2004)

Among the major improvements and innovations introduced by the Government are the one-stop counters located on the ground floor of office buildings to answer questions from the public; the use of an electronic queuing system to facilitate queues at counters; and one-stop bill payment centers. The GIRO system also facilitates the collection of fees for several public services at a single counter to streamline the flow and increase public revenue; the online computer system enables information to be accessed immediately from the main computer system; and the general information telephone system provides inquiry service via telephone to enable members of the public to obtain basic information without having to go to the counters. In addition to these examples, efforts have been made to upgrade the physical aspects of the client/counter services through the provision of additional counters, better layout, setting up of information counters, "paper-less" bureaucracy, landscaping of offices, provision of directional signs and signposts and other basic facilities for the public. (Abdul Karim, 2004)

To further assist government agencies in enhancing and systematizing their client/counter services, the Government has prepared and distributed a guidebook outlining a four-stage approach for upgrading the quality of services. To ensure government personnel efficiently fulfill the needs of their customers who often use telephones to obtain public services, "A guideline towards the improvement of the



quality of telephone communication" was issued. (Abdul Karim, 2004) It is intended for use by both the telephone operator and other government personnel who frequently provide services over the telephone.

A recent innovation in the public service is the "Client's Charter". It involves a written commitment by a government agency to deliver goods and services to its customers according to predetermined quality standards. It is now mandatory for all government agencies to formulate their Client's Charter. (Abdul Karim, 2004) The introduction of this innovation reflects the commitment of the Government to ensure that agencies are customer-focused. Based on the Client's Charter at the agency level, individual officers are required to write their own Client's Charter, which explicitly states the quality of service or output that will be provided to their customers. This makes the process more transparent to the customers. (Abdul Karim, 2004) Departments that have formulated their Client's Charter report a significant drop in complaints.

To ensure the services provided meet the standards set by the Client's Charter, agencies are required to undertake a continuous review of their work processes and systems. In the event an agency is not able to meet its established standards, it is required to take action to ensure such failures do not recur in the future. The Government has issued an "Implementation guideline for service recovery" to assist government agencies in undertaking such actions. (Abdul Karim, 2004)

## **IX. Road Transport Department – Background, Quality Slogan and Client’s Charter**

The Road Transport Department (RTD) was established in 1937 under the Traffic Enactment 1937, a British military law in the Federated Malay States. Known then as the Road Transport Board, it governed and licensed public industries. However, with the creation of the administration of Malaya in April 1946, the powers of the board were taken over by the Motor Vehicles Registry and Inspection Office, which covered the whole of Malaya.

Prior to 1937, motor vehicles were under the control of four Federated Malay States, i.e. the Perak and Selangor Police, Negeri Sembilan Chief Inspector and six district officers in Pahang. Motor vehicles were not regulated in the Unfederated Malay States until the Traffic Enactment 1937 was passed. With the establishment of the department, the Road Traffic Ordinance 1953 was passed to replace the Traffic Enactment 1937. Realizing the importance of enforcing the new law, especially against commercial vehicles, an Enforcement Division was set up. (Road Transport Department, 2008)

On 1 April 1946, the Road Transport Department was set up to coordinate all aspects relating to transport for the entire country. Various laws relating to road transport were also formulated such as the Road Traffic Ordinance 1958 and Road Transport Act 1987. These were aimed at streamlining the country’s transport laws besides serving as platforms for the RTD to carry out its responsibilities. As the national transport system progressed rapidly in the 1980’s, the RTD became increasingly burdened with

numerous responsibilities. Thus, a restructuring of the department was undertaken to enhance its efficiency in line with the needs of the time. Several new divisions with their respective functions were created, with various innovations introduced to enhance the quality of service. The 1990's saw tremendous progress in the department as it responded positively to the demands of the transport system. (Road Transport Department, 2008)

The Road Transport Department is one of departments under the Ministry of Transport's Land Division. It is responsible for the provision of counter services for the licensing of vehicles and drivers and the enforcement of the Road Transport Act 1987 to ensure safe drivers and vehicles. It is an organization, which provides quality services, manages the collection of revenues, and enforces the road transport act in a transparent and effective manner. (Road Transport Department, 2008)

Road Transport Department – Quality Slogan and Client's Charter.

Quality Slogan:

'Quality service is the catalyst to an excellent public service delivery system. In line with the vision of the Road Transport Department, it is our responsibility to deliver the best and quality service.'

## **X. Summary**

Today's customers are increasingly sophisticated and quality conscious. The theory and practice of customer service quality has received considerable attention from

the public. The definition of customer service can be summarized as a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction and it is important for organizations to survive and remain competitive. Customer Service Representatives plays important roles because they can provide the positive perspective of public sector from interacting with customers every day. The two views of customer service in this chapter shows that customers are not only looking at the product itself, but also the quality of service. The customer service triangle demonstrates that system, strategies and people are three important elements in providing excellent service. Customer Service Representative who practices a good customer service ethics can pass positive feedback to the customer and turn them to become repeat customers. There are a few methods that can be implemented by public agencies to measure the quality of customer service such as survey, focus group, online search, toll-free line and mystery shop. They need to choose the most appropriate method for their department to obtain accurate result. Few factors contributing to poor customer service quality in public sector are lack of motivation, low pay scale, bureaucracy, no recognition for achievers, and the working environment itself.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### **I. Design of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to measure the quality of customer service provided by public sector agencies in Malaysia and to identify where improvements can be made. The study focuses on Road Transport Department as one of the branch in public agencies. A descriptive method has been utilized by the researcher. The URL to access the online questionnaire was included in the email sent to all respondents.

### **II. Study Population and Sampling**

The target populations for this research are customers who have interacted with Road Transport Department. Since the population is too great, the researcher has chosen 100 customers as a sample.

### **III. Instruments**

The online questionnaire is the primary source in collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed based on the replication process, where researcher takes some questions from previous similar research such as senior students and established researchers through their thesis and articles. Based on those sources, another new set of questions related to this study was generated. To make the online questionnaire more understandable, some changes were made to the replicated questionnaire to make it more understandable to the study sample.

In addition, the online questionnaire was generated based on the literature review. Questions were design based on the important or relevant point available in the literature review.

In addition, a pilot study involving five respondents from the sample has been conducted. The main objective of the pilot study was to make sure respondents understand the questions. Based on the feedback from the pilot study, a better set of questionnaire has been developed and distributed to the respondents. Questions were scale-based; including a category scale (to elicit single response), Likert scale (to examine how strongly subjects agree or disagree with the statements), multiple choice, and open-ended questions.

#### **IV. Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection is very essential for making research valid and meaningful. To perform this, the researcher used two types of procedures to collect data. The first procedure was by obtaining data from secondary sources such as journals, internet articles, magazines, newspapers and books. The second procedure was by using online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was distributed to 100 customers who had interactions with Road Transport Department. This method was accomplished by only selecting those with driving license to answer it. People who owned a driving license were more likely to have interacted with this department. In addition, this method was the most cost-effective method in collecting data. This method also provided accurate and precise information for this research.

## **V. Data Analysis**

Data analysis was used to produce the findings and result of the study. All data were analyzed by summing-up all the responds for each individual question and it is presented in table format. The total counts for each rating were also calculated for questions that were using Likert Scale. All answers for open-ended question were grouped together if they have similarities and presented in a table too. In addition, some of the data were already been calculated with the help of Surveymonkey.com.

## Chapter 4 – Results and Findings

### I. Introduction

The URL to access online questionnaire was distributed to all respondents via e-mail. The cut-off point for this survey was 100. Surveymonkey.com was set to automatically reject all response after 100 respondents answered the questionnaire.

In brief, this chapter discusses and described the findings and analysis taken from the distributed online questionnaire. All three objectives of the study are outlined, along with the results and findings related to the specific objective. Data is then analyzed with tables demonstrating the result with some discussion about it.

### II. Demographics of Respondents

The table below represents the demographic of respondents involved in this study. The demographic of respondents are categorized into four areas which are: gender, age, highest level of education, and position level. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the respondents comprise of customers who have experienced interaction with Road Transport Department.

**Table 2: Demographics of Respondents.**

	<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Gender/Sex:	Male	53.0%	53
	Female	47.0%	47



		<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>
Age:	16 – 30	60.0%	60
	31 – 40	25.0%	25
	41 – 50	15.0%	15
	51 – 60	0.0%	0
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>
Highest Level of Education:	High school	18.0%	18
	Certificate	4.0%	4
	Diploma	22.0%	22
	Bachelor Degree	44.0%	44
	Master/PhD	12.0%	12
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>
Position Level:	Clerical	15.0%	15
	Executive	33.0%	33
	Middle Management	23.0%	23
	Top Management	4.0%	4
	Not working (please specify)	25.0%	25
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>

In the gender section, the number of male respondent is 53 (53%) while the number of female respondent is 43 (43%). In the age section, a majority of the

respondents involved in this study are between 16 to 30 years old (60%). It is followed by the respondents with the range of age between 31 to 40 years old (25%), and 41 to 50 (15%). Surprisingly, there are no respondents between 51 and 60 years old involved in this study.

In the “highest level of education” section, most respondents involved in this study have a Bachelor Degree. This represents the largest proportion with 44 respondents (44%). It is followed by respondents with a diploma (22%), and Master/PhD (12%). Eighteen percent of respondents have high school qualification with the smallest number of respondents having a certificate (4%).

In the “current position” section, it shows 33% of respondents are Executives, followed by those who were not working (25%). Twenty three percent of the respondents hold a Middle Management position with only 15% doing clerical work. Lastly, only 4% of the respondents are from Top Management.

**III. Findings on Objective 1: To identify the method, frequency and purpose of contact with public sector agencies.**

The table below represents the methods used by respondents to interact with Road Transport Department.

**Table 3: Methods for Interacting with Road Transport Department.**

<p><b>What method(s) did you usually use to interact with this department?</b></p> <p><b>(Multiple answer)</b></p>
--

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
In person / Counter	91.8%	90
Telephone	43.9%	43
Mail	1.0%	1
E-mail	19.4%	19
Fax	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>98</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

This chart demonstrates most of the respondents prefer to walk-in to obtain services (91.8%). The second preferred method is by telephone, which represents almost half of the people who chose to walk-in. Only 19.4% chose to communicate with Road Transport Department through e-mail. In addition, only 1.0% chose to contact the department by normal mail due to the availability of other options such as e-mail, telephone, etc. which is faster and more convenient. Lastly, none of the respondents chose to contact this department via fax.

The table below shows the purpose of contact with Road Transport Department.

**Table 4: Purpose of Contact with Road Transport Department.**

<b>What was the nature of your contact with this department?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>

General information.	17.3%	17
Problem resolution.	11.2%	11
Licensing (Renewal/ Assistance)	70.4%	69
Other (please specify)	1.0%	1
<i>Answered question</i>		<b>98</b>
<i>Skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

This chart demonstrates most of the respondents interact with Road Transport Department to renew and get assistance for their license (70.4%). Only 17.3% of the respondents contact this department for general information, while 11.2% is for problem resolution.

The table below shows the frequency of contact made by respondents with Road Transport Department.

**Table 5: Frequency of Contact with Road Transport Department.**

<b>Approximately, how many times have you had contact with the representative from this department?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Once	35.7%	35
2 – 5 times	57.1%	56
More than 5 times	7.1%	7

<i>Answered question</i>	98
<i>Skipped question</i>	2

A majority of the respondents interacted with this department between two to five times (57.1%). This shows they have much experience in evaluating the quality of customer service provided by Road Transport Department. Thirty five respondents only have one experience in dealing with the department. Only a small number of the respondents interact more than five times with this department.

**IV. Findings on Objective 2: To measure customer service quality provided by public sector agencies.**

The table below summarized respondents’ beliefs about the quality of Customer Service Representative at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 6: Respondents’ Beliefs about the Quality of Customer Service Representative.**

<b>Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
The Customer Service Representative was	2	28	13	48	0	3.175824	91

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
knowledgeable, helpful and easy to understand.							
The Customer Service Representative was able to handle my problem quickly and to my satisfaction.	2	20	18	51	0	3.296703	91
I was treated with respect by the Customer Service Representative.	1	19	22	48	1	3.31868	91

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.							
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
The Customer Service Representative was courteous and professional.	1	14	24	52	0	3.39560	91
<i>answered question</i>							<b>91</b>
<i>skipped question</i>							<b>9</b>

The table above gathered the entire respondents' beliefs about the quality of Customer Service Representative at the Road Transport Department. The highest number of respondents disagree the Customer Service Representative is knowledgeable, helpful and easy to understand. Fifty one respondents also disagree the Customer Service Representative handle their problem quickly and to their satisfaction.

In addition, a majority of the respondents (48%) disagree they are treated with respect by the Customer Service Representative. Lastly, 52 respondents disagree the Customer Service Representative is courteous and professional.

The table below shows the amount of time taken before respondents meet the Customer Service Representative at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 7: Respondent’s Waiting Time to Meet the Customer Service Representative.**

<b>About how long did you have to wait before speaking/meeting to a representative from this department?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
I was taken care of immediately	3.4%	3
Within 5 minutes	4.5%	4
6 – 20 minutes	36.4%	32
More than 20 minutes	55.7%	49
<i>answered question</i>		<b>88</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>12</b>

It shows that 55.7% of the respondents mentioned it taking more than 20 minutes to meet the Customer Service Representative. The reasons for the above are possibly due to a limited number of opened counters, too many customers during peak hours, and lack of efficiency in the department itself. In addition, 36.4% of the respondents mentioned it taking between 6 to 20 minutes for them before meeting with the Customer Service Representative. Lastly, 4.5% of respondents were taken care within five minutes and only 3.4% were taken care immediately.



The table below shows the respondents' beliefs about the quality of customer service experience at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 8: Respondents' Beliefs about the Quality of Customer Service Experience.**

<b>Indicate how strongly you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
How satisfied are you with the printed/non-printed information you received to obtain services.	4	28	37	19	0	2.806818	88
How satisfied are you with the time it took customer	0	20	21	47	0	3.306818	88

**Indicate how strongly you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
service to answer your question or resolve your issue?							
How satisfied are you with the way your question or problem was resolved?	1	17	25	44	0	3.287356	87
How would you rate your overall experience during your	1	17	25	43	2	3.318182	88

Indicate how strongly you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following regarding the customer service you received at the Road Transport Department.							
Answer Options	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Rating Average	Response Count
last contact with them?							
<i>Answered question</i>							<b>88</b>
<i>Skipped question</i>							<b>12</b>

Majority of the respondents expressed neutral satisfaction level with the printed and non-printed information they received from this department. Most of the respondents are dissatisfied with the time it took for customer service to answer their question or resolving their issue. The number of unsatisfied respondents for this statement is 47. However, the rating average for this indicates a majority of the respondents neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the time it took for customer service to resolve their issue.

In addition, 44 respondents indicated they are dissatisfied with the resolution of their question or problem. Lastly, 43 respondents indicated they are dissatisfied with the overall experience during their last contact with the representative from this department.

The table below summarizes the complaints regarding the quality of customer service quality at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 9: Summary of Complaints Regarding Customer Service Quality.**

No.	Response Text
1	I need to deal with third party person for certain services, such as to obtain information from JPJ on specific issues.
2	They got so many customers to attend all time.
3	I have to wait for a long time; they are so slow in processing everything. They also did something else for themselves when dealing with the customers.
4	There were a lot of counters but some minor of them used and other major are not used. It makes people waiting longer.
5	The procedure to change new name owner of the vehicle is quite difficult.
6	They were not polite and treat us as if we are nuisance.
7	They not keen to assist.
8	They don't have product knowledge.
9	Bureaucracy.
10	They are not efficient in doing task.
11	The representative talked too much with her colleague & didn't concentrate in resolving my problem.
12	The Customer Service Representative was too serious and not even smiled at me.
13	The Customer Service Representative came back late for lunch. At the same time, not many counters were opened.

No.	Response Text
14	The representative didn't perform her job systematically. Papers were all over her desk. It took a long time just to resolve my simple issue.
15	It took a long time for them to answer my question over the phone.

Some of the complaints have been eliminated due to their similarities in nature.

Based on the table above, some of the respondents were unhappy because they had to deal with a third party person to obtain certain services. In some cases, the third party person required the customer to pay them just for simple service. Some of the respondents mentioned they had to wait for a long time to meet the representative. Some Customer Service Representatives were slow in processing customers' request and did something else for themselves while dealing with the customers. The numbers of counters opened were insufficient enough to cater all customers at one time especially during peak hours. The poor quality of Customer Service Representatives also contributed to the complaints. Some of the respondents mentioned the representative was not polite, not keen to assist and didn't have product knowledge. In some of the complaints, the respondents said the representatives were talking too much with their colleagues and didn't concentrate in resolving the customers' problems. Other complaints indicate the representative was too serious and didn't even smile at the customer. Some of them didn't have systematic way of doing work which contributed to delay in resolving issues. Lastly, the existence of too many procedures and bureaucracy also gave negative impact to the processing time. It caused delay and some simple processes will take longer than expected.

**V. Findings on Objective 3: To recommend which area(s) that needs for improvement.**

The table below summarized the measures to be taken to improve the quality of Customer Service Representative at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 10: Respondents’ Suggestions on How to Improve the Quality of Customer Service Representative.**

No.	Response Text
1	The Customer Service Representative should learn how to talk nicely with a right tone.
2	Smile more often.
3	They need to be more passive listener to the customers so that they can deliver better service.
4	The service is fast and good. But the representative could have done better in terms of hospitality. She hardly smile and not really friendly.
5	They should learn to be more polite and customer friendly.
6	He/she should improve her communication skills.
7	The representative need to be polite and do be a professional while doing their task.
8	Well, the definitely need to improve on their product knowledge (they keep saying "I'm not sure" every time I ask them questions).  And for heaven's sake, for those who are providing signatures for approval,

No.	Response Text
	<p>please DO NOT let us wait for you... It is so annoying!</p> <p>And also, please be polite. It wouldn't hurt to smile courteously.</p>
9	They should know more than 1 language.
10	He/she should avoid from saying "I don't know"
11	They should stop talking with other colleagues while dealing with customers.
12	Sometimes they raise their voice if we ask many questions.
13	<p>The Customer Service Representative keeps asking her colleague for confirmation. No self-confidence.</p>
14	She didn't even greet me at the counter.

The respondents said the representative should learn to talk professionally and with a right tone to the customers. The representative also should know when to use a right tone at a right time. They also must put a smile each time dealing with customers. Even though they are not in a good mood or having a bad day, they shouldn't show it to the customers. Some of the respondents mentioned the representatives have to be a passive listener. In addition, the respondents recommended the representative has to be more polite, customer friendly, and professional while dealing with customers. They also should improve their communication skills and must have the ability to communicate in more than one language. They should avoid from saying negative phrase such as "I don't know" or "I'm not sure". In addition, the respondents suggested the representative to minimize asking their colleagues to confirm on stuffs such as

procedures, materials, etc. This will take the customer's time. Lastly, the respondents also suggested that it will be better if the representative could stop talking with their colleague while dealing with the customer. This would avoid mistake from happening and provide focus on the customer.

The table below summarized the respondents' suggestion for improving the quality of customer service experience at the Road Transport Department.

**Table 11: Respondents' Suggestions on How to Improve the Quality of Customer Service Experience.**

No.	Response Text
1	More seats should be provided. Customers have to wait for long time and there were not enough seats.
2	Abolish the role of middle man in the office and some of the processes can be shorten to minimize bureaucracy.
3	Open more counters.
4	Provide the workers with the customer service courses.
5	They should well-versed in Malay and English language.
6	Communication, Smile, Respect, Value of Customers' Time.
7	Need to be more professional besides friendly to customer too
8	The customer service must give lots of information about new procedure of a application



No.	Response Text
9	Improve on their people skills.
10	More courteous, well-trained personnel with good communication skill.
11	They should treat customer as a king.
12	They should know how to handle customer in any situation.
13	Reduce procedures/bureaucracy.
14	Supervisor should ensure their staffs are doing work efficiently.
15	They should express positive attitude when dealing with customers.
16	The Customer Service Representative should be more responsible especially when there are a lot of customers are waiting.
17	Be more systematic and have product knowledge.
18	If the representative can't answer the question, don't make customer wait on the phone. Just pass over to someone that can help.

The respondents recommended more seats should be provided to cater large number of customers especially during peak hours. This will make the customer to feel more comfortable especially if they have to wait for a long time to meet the representative. This will also cater the needs for senior citizen and disabled people. Priority of the seats should be given to them. There were respondents who suggested abolishing the role of middle person as some of them were just taking advantage of the customers (Middle person is the individual who assists the customer to get their issues resolved by charging some cost to the customer). In addition, the respondents also

suggested eliminating unnecessary procedures and reduce bureaucracy as only slows the process. Some respondents said the representative should be given more training on customer service and they must be able to converse in more than one language. The representative also must aware of new procedures and have to inform the customer about it when necessary.

Besides that, the Customer Service Representative also must be able to handle any customer situation. They should manage and control their staffs effectively. Other suggestions recommended that the representative should express positive attitude, be more responsible and have product knowledge. Lastly, the representative shouldn't make the customer to wait on the phone if they cannot answer or resolve the issues. It will be good if they transfer the call to someone who has the expertise and can resolve the problem.

## **VI. Summary**

The demographic section summarizes that the majority of the respondents were male and out of 100 respondents, a majority of them were still young and already working. The result of this study shows most of the respondents were unsatisfied with the quality of customer service provided by Road Transport Department. All of these mostly can be seen on questions using the Likert Scale. Some respondents expressed their dissatisfaction by writing down complaints on the open-ended question. They emphasized on professionalism, communication skills, waiting time, facilities, and procedures. The respondents also gave recommendations to improve the quality of

customer service at the Road Transport Department. Some of them suggested sending staffs for customer service course, hiring right people, minimize unnecessary procedures, improve facilities and empower the roles of Supervisor.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

### I. Conclusions

Other similar studies related to customer service quality might have been accomplished by other researchers. However those studies definitely have their own uniqueness and were different in some areas such as the target audience, location, and nature of business. This study itself could be a mirror for other government agencies in Malaysia (specifically) to know their current level of customer service quality. Several weaknesses have been identified in this study and improvements need to be done. Most common complaint regarded the poor quality of the Customer Service Representative themselves. Out of 100 respondents, the survey demonstrated the representative has poor communication skills, are not customer friendly, are inefficient, don't have product knowledge, and are not systematic in accomplishing their task. Other things giving a negative impact were insufficient number of counters opened, too many unnecessary procedures, bureaucracy, and slow response time. The respondents also gave their views about how to improve the quality of Customer Service Representative and the experience itself. The Customer Service Representative needs to be a customer-centered person. They should know how to interact professionally with the customer. Effective communication skill is very important for those who interact with customers on daily basis. Representatives who are well-versed in other languages also an added advantage because there are three major races in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). This decreases the communication barrier between the representative and

customer. In addition, Customer Service Representatives also must have product knowledge to ensure customer receives proper information. Some respondents also suggested sending the representative to a customer service course and that the Supervisor should show good example to their subordinates.

The Road Transport Department needs to improve the facilities and the atmosphere needs to be changed. Customer needs a comfortable environment and priority should be given to older citizen and disabled people. In addition, they need to review all the procedures and eliminate unnecessary ones to expedite the process. All the important information the customer needs to have should be readily available anytime. The department could provide more handouts, posters, pamphlet, etc. for customers.

For customers who interact with this department via e-mail or phone, they also should be treated professionally. The representative should provide prompt reply in resolving their issues. They should use proper language and ensure the customers understand the content of the e-mail. Phone calls should be answered within the first few rings and it should be transferred to person who can resolve the issue.

In addition, the researcher provided some suggestions that will help to improve the quality of customer service in government agencies (see recommendations).

## II. Recommendations

After the completion of the study, the researcher identified several weaknesses and will make some recommendation regarding the quality of customer service provided by government agencies. Focus will be provided about these two aspects:

- *Improving Quality of Customer Service Representative*

Findings from the previous chapter show that most of the respondents were unsatisfied with the way they have been treated by the Customer Service Representative at the Road Transport Department. This definitely gives an indicator that improvement needs to be accomplished to rectify the situation. The researcher believes customer service training is very crucial to shape and develop a good Customer Service Representative. These representatives are the frontline of the organization and deal with customers on daily basis. Any mistake produces a negative impact to the organization. The Road Transport Department can send their employees for variety of training on regular basis and this will improve their communication and people skills.

Customer Service Managers/Supervisors also play an important role in improving the quality of their staff. They should lead by example and show respect for customers. If they see their subordinates treating the customers in an unnecessary manner, they should help them to change their attitude. Hiring the right Customer Service Representative is important. Government agencies should improve their hiring process. Only suitable and customer-friendly candidate should work for the

organization. There are a lot of young and energetic graduates they can hire to “refresh” the working environment and bring in new ideas for improvement. Customers need their request and issues resolved immediately; their time is valuable.

Lastly, government agencies need to establish an environment where great customer service is recognized and rewarded and poor customer service is challenged and rectified. It is very important to ensure employees are happy in completing their task. The Customer Service Representatives deals with a lot of complaints everyday and they need their effort to be recognized. This motivates them in positive way. However, for those representatives who deliver bad customer service should be challenged to rectify the problem or change their attitude.

- *Improving Quality of Customer Service Experience*

The researcher found most of the respondents were unsatisfied with their experience while dealing with Customer Service Representative from the Road Transport Department. A customer service experience is a journey to view a customer service through the eyes of the customer. The journey can be literal, from first point of contact onwards, or more conceptual, as appropriate. The point is to understand customers’ needs at different touch points in the journey, and to understand how to build a stronger relationship with the customer.

Based on the findings in previous chapter, the researcher will recommend measures to enhance the customer service experience provided by Road Transport

Department. A quick response time is very crucial to ensure that customer's request and issues are resolved without delay. If the department has insufficient number of Customer Service Representative, they should consider hiring practices. A set of systematic hiring practices could help the representative save a lot of time.

Another way to enhance the experience is by opening more counters to speed up the process. Priority should be given to those with urgent matters and need immediate attention. If the representative is new at work, someone who has more experience should shadow them while doing their task. This could prevent them from making a mistake affecting the customer. In addition, the number of seats could be increased to enhance customer's experience. Don't make them to stand for so long just to obtain service from the department. Priority should be given to senior citizen and disabled customers.

Unnecessary procedures and bureaucracy processes also should be eliminated to enhance the experience. Multi-level approval policies slow the process. Things that can be resolved within a day take longer if bureaucracy still exists within the department. The role of Customer Service Representative needs to be examined. They are the most crucial point to enhance customer's experience. They should be customer friendly, knowledgeable, systematic and efficient in performing their tasks. They also should put themselves in customer's shoes to deliver a good experience to the customer.



Lastly, the Road Transport Department might consider developing more computerized or online application to ease the customer. They should make full use of the internet. Most of their customers are working people and developing online system will definitely save their time. Most importantly, the systems have to be user-friendly and easy to navigate.

### **III. Recommendations for Future Research**

The following should be considered in future research:

- *Larger sample of respondents.*

Future researcher might consider using more than 100 respondents.

- *Larger target location throughout government.*

Study could be conducted in more than one department since this study only focused on the Road Transport Department.

- *Build quality measures.*

Future researcher might consider building or applying other quality measurement methods to accomplish the study.

- *Examine existing processes.*

Future research might be accomplished by examining the current process in government agencies, and propose new solutions to improve the quality of customer service.

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