CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:
A STUDY ON HIGHWAY SERVICE PROVIDER

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ABSTRACT

In today’s world of globalization, the provision of infrastructures of which highway network plays an important role, is essential to enhance the nation’s competitiveness and maintain an edge over its competitors. The development of automobile has changed the function of a road from facility provider mainly for commerce to a public utility serving all the mankind. The road users in Malaysia have become more educated, better informed, more internalized and as Malaysian economy become more and more knowledge based, their demand for high quality services expends with the increase in customers’ buying power. They need not only required a safe road but also a good service and properly maintained facilities during their stop by and rest. Thus, this study will focuses on service quality and customer satisfaction in the Highway management services and its facilities maintenance by the highway concessionaires.

The purpose of this study is to assess and examines the customer’s satisfaction and perception of the service quality level provided by the PLUS Expressway Berhad using modified SERVQUAL model and secondly, to assess customer’s satisfaction towards service quality of highway management services in Malaysia.

Service quality is a very complex phenomenon due to the nature of services. The characteristics of service have been summarised in terms of four basic features: i) service is intangible, ii) service is a process iii) service is partly consumed or experienced at the time it is produced and iv) the customer participates in the process of service production. In this study the service quality approach will be defined as the difference between customer expectation of service and perceived service.

Customer satisfaction is the state of mind that customers have about a company when their expectations have been met or exceed over the lifetime of the product or service. Satisfaction itself can refer to a number of different facts of the relationship with a customer, one of which is satisfaction with the quality of a particular service or product. Customer satisfaction is an ambiguous and abstract concept and the actual manifestation of the state of satisfaction will vary from person to person and from product to product. Satisfaction is a function of perceived service and expectations. If the service quality falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If the service quality matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. However, if the service quality exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted. Relatively, proper managing the quality of service and customer satisfaction will lead to increase the bottom line results and the economic growth of the company.

Limitation of research on service quality in highway services has call upon this study to develop new service quality model so called HIWAYQUAL. This conceptual framework is developed based on the extension and modification of the existing SERVQUAL model to suits the industry. The study adopted quantitative methodology on convenient sampling with 300 questionnaires distributed to the highway users based on quota races in Malaysia at the Rest and Service Areas of Northern Region of North South Expressways. 264 respondent data has been analysed on this study due to incomplete information.
The research demonstrates that the model is reliable based on the reliability test. The findings also provide insight of the customer’s perception and satisfaction levels towards the highway management services. It is observed that the gaps scores were negatives or less than one, which suggested that the respondents perceived quality of the service were less than expectation. The greatest disparity among the dimensions between expectation and perception means was Pavement condition. The respondents are also requested to rank the importance of each dimension in the technical construct. Again the pavement condition ranks the highest. In this observation, the highway users are still not satisfied with the services provided by the highway users.

There is still room for improvement for the highway service provider in providing quality service for highway user to meet their customer’s satisfaction. The Highway service provider and its management has to focus on their future program and planning the importance of the pavement conditions that includes the driving comfort, safety of the roads and road line marking. These three technical dimensions are regarded as the core for good road maintenance and managements. Without proper care and maintenance of these three pavement elements will cause more complaints received and dissatisfaction among the highway users.
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