Customer Satisfaction Management through the Use of Efficient Listening Tools: The Case of Kasapa Telecom Limited Ho, Volta *Region*

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Abstract
The main objective of this study was to examine how Kasapa Telecom Limited, Ho, uses listening as a tool for managing customer satisfaction. Two hundred questionnaires were administered to customers of Kasapa in Ho, to ascertain how the Company used listening and other best practice strategies like; customer complaints, critical activity surveys, employee feedbacks, benchmarking and customer visits, as a tool, to collect information for managing customer relationship to improve of service quality. The research revealed that Kasapa Telecom Limited, used customer complaints and customer visits as the most effective listening tools for gathering information to improve service quality. Benchmarking and critical activity surveys were the least used listening tools by the Company for maintaining customer trust and loyalty. It was also revealed that Kasapa used best practice strategies like customer complaint forms and suggestion boxes for managing its customer relationship. The study found out that the greatest challenge facing Kasapa Telecom Limited was competition from rival players within the telecommunication industry. The study recommends the intensification of the use of benchmarking and critical activity surveys as tools for gaining competitive advantage within the industry.
Key words: Customer satisfaction, listening tools, customer complaints management.

Introduction

Customer satisfaction is the leading criterion for determining the quality actually delivered to customers (Olga et al, 2003). Customer satisfaction can refer to different areas of the relationship with the customer including satisfaction with the quality of a product or service, satisfaction with an ongoing business relationship, satisfaction with the price or performance ratio of a product or service, or satisfaction because they have met or exceeded a customer's expectations (Olga et al, 2003).

Customer satisfaction has been defined as the result achieved when service or product features respond to customer needs and when the company meets or exceeds customers' expectations over the lifetime of a product or service (Stevenson, 2005). As satisfaction is defined from the customers' perspective, all satisfaction improvement projects must start by defining what customer wants or needs from a company (Maguire & Koh, 2006). Satisfaction is the customer's fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service provided or is providing a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment (Oakland & Tanner 2006).

There is considerable evidence to support the view that customer satisfaction is vital to the success of organisations and that customer satisfaction is linked to profits (Oakland & Tanner 2006). There is a connection between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. Maguire and Koh (2006) demonstrated the relationship between satisfied customers and satisfied employees with their cycle of good service. The cycle suggested that satisfied customers will tolerate higher margins that can be used to pay employees more, which boosts employee morale, reduces employee turnover and ultimately helps produce more satisfied customers (Benchmarking Exchange 2007).

In addition, Olga et al. (2003) pointed out that if customers are satisfied, employees would not have to listen to complaints and might feel better about their job, leading to increased employee retention and reduction in the cost associated with hiring new employees (Oakland & Tanner 2006). Maguire & Koh (2006) explored the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and its subsequent effects on purchase intentions and they concluded that perceived service quality leads to satisfaction, and that satisfaction in turn had a significant positive effect on purchase intent. Oakland & Tanner (2006) also found support for this relationship between satisfaction and purchase intentions.

Best practice tool of listening can be used to obtain information about customers' needs, preferences, and perceptions of performance. Many organisations are finding themselves in increasingly competitive business environments. In many instances, they must totally revamp their business strategy to become more customer-focused.

Statement of the Problem

Measurement of satisfaction must be a continuous process that infuses the voice of the customer into the firm's decision process. Maguire & Koh (2006) believed that there are three reasons for this. Firstly, very few firms ever achieved 100% customer satisfaction but by striving for it, a company will continuously improve, and so will employee morale and satisfaction. Secondly, because customers' views are constantly changing, if a customer satisfaction programme presents only a one-off glimpse of those views, the customers may drift away. If their needs are dynamic and the firm is static, gaps will emerge. The third reason involves competition. Although some competitors may not change, many will. If a firm is not engaging in competitive benchmarking on a continual basis, competition may overtake it. The firm may be improving, but at a slower rate than its competitors. The results will be competitive vulnerability, followed by poorer financial performance (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Olga et al (2003) also stated that there are five factors that are important in developing an effective customer satisfaction programme: customer information; senior management support; employee input and action; benchmarking; and financial evaluation. Indeed, a customer satisfaction programme is a comprehensive system approach for effectively managing customer needs and experiences. It involves systematically listening to multiple customer voices, analyzing, prioritizing and responding to customer issues.

Typically, a customer satisfaction programme as discussed by Maguire & Koh (2006) has been used by many organisations and is defined as follows:

- Capture and multiple customer voices – direct and real-time feedback
- Analyse and integrate of multiple customer voices and prioritization of key focus areas
- Respond and appreciate owners performing root-cause analysis to resolve key focus areas
- Verify and communicate improvement results to customers, obtain new inputs from customers.

If a company wants to maximize the value it provides, it must maximize its understanding of its customers. Whether it is the lifestyle a consumer wants to project or a problem a company is seeking to solve, the underlying premise is the same. Value rests not in its products and services, but what they allow their customers to achieve (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Real value is only possible with a real understanding of customers. This article focuses on the customer listening tools that Kasapa Telecom Limited Ho uses to achieve customer satisfaction management, including the use of relationship surveys, dissatisfaction surveys, critical activity surveys, lost and why surveys, employee feedback, customer visits, analysis of customer complaints, comment cards, benchmarking, focus groups and observations.

Measuring customer satisfaction leads to identification of ways of improving product or service quality, which in turn leads to increasing a company's competitive advantage. This best-practice study examined the customer relations or satisfaction management at the Kasapa Telecommunications Ltd, Ho Branch. The article also assessed customers' perception of the services of Kasapa to see whether they met the quality expectations of majority of its customers. The primary contribution of this study is the examination of a variety of different customer listening tools a company can use to improve its customer satisfaction management to maintain their trust and loyalty and maximise profit for its shareholders.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are therefore stated as follows:

1. How does customer relations/satisfaction management use listening as a tool to obtain information about customer needs, preferences and perception of performance from customers?
2. What best practices are available to Kasapa for managing customer perception and satisfaction?
3. What are the challenges facing Ho Branch of Kasapa in providing quality services and products to meet customer satisfaction?
4. What can Kasapa do with information it gathers through listening to customers to improve quality of service and customer satisfaction?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine best practices that can lead to improvements in the quality of services rendered and the degree of customer satisfaction by Kasapa Telecom Ltd, Ho.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine how customer relations/satisfaction uses various listening tools to obtain information about customer needs preferences and perceptions of their performance.
2. To identify some best practices for managing customer perception and satisfaction.
3. To identify the challenges facing Ho Branch of Kasapa Tel in providing quality services and products to meet customer satisfaction.
4. To determine what Kasapa Telecom Ltd should do to improve quality of service and customer satisfaction through the use of information it gathers through listening to customers.

Methodology and Scope

Questionnaires were administered to 250 customers of Kasapa Telecom Limited Ho, to ascertain their perception

on use of listening as a tool for managing customer satisfaction by Kasapa Telecom Limited. Interviews were held with management staff of Kasapa on the use of listening as a tool for managing customer satisfaction. Data collected were analysed with SPSS.

Literature Review

The review is presented under the following sub-headings; Customer satisfaction, satisfaction and profitability, customer satisfaction programmes and best practices in customer satisfaction management.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the leading criterion for determining the quality actually delivered to customers (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

It relate to different areas of the relationship with the customer, including satisfaction with the quality of a product, satisfaction with an ongoing business relationship, satisfaction with the price or performance ratio of a product or satisfaction because a product has met a customer's expectations (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Customer satisfaction has been defined as the result achieved when service or product features respond to customer needs and when the company meets or exceeds customers' expectations over the lifetime of a product or service (Juran, 1991; Kelsey and Bond, 2001). As satisfaction is defined from customers' perspective, all satisfaction improvement projects must start by defining what customers want and need from a company (Oliver, 1981). Satisfaction is the customer's fulfillment response, or the product or service, itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment, including levels of under-or-over-fulfillment (Oliver, 1997).

Satisfaction and Profitability

There is considerable evidence to support the view that customer satisfaction is vital to the success of organisations and that customer satisfaction is linked to profits (Bitner, 1990; Heskett et al., 1994; Schneider, 1990). There is a connection between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. Olga et al (2003) demonstrated the relationship between satisfied customers and satisfied employees with their cycle of good and service. The cycle suggests that satisfied customers will tolerate higher margins that can be used to pay employees more, which boosts employee morale, reduces employee turnover, and ultimately helps produce more satisfied customers (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

In addition, Olga et al (2003) pointed out that if customers are satisfied, employees will not have to listen to complaints and may feel better about their job, leading to increased employee retention and reduction in the cost associated with hiring new employees. Certainly, satisfied customers will pay a premium for services and reduce a company's cost of providing services because there are fewer complaints to deal with Olga et al (2003). Thus, there may be a further positive impact on profitability over time.

Rust and Zahorik (1993), explored the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and its subsequent effects on purchase intentions and they concluded that perceived service quality leads to satisfaction and that satisfaction, in turn, had a significant positive effect on purchase intent (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). In fact, satisfied customers provide recommendations for the companies, especially those who stated that they were very satisfied (Thornton, 2001). Moreover, satisfied customers are more likely to respond to cross-selling efforts (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Thus, improved customer satisfaction means more sales and more profit.

Customer Satisfaction Programmes

Olga et al (2003) pointed out that customer satisfaction measurement is the principal tool by which organisations assess the health of their relationship with their customers. A customer satisfaction programme provides the ability to diagnose and strengthen relationships with 'at risk' customers – those clients with negative service experience, new customers, and customers in competitive markets (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Likewise, it can help define and maintain an ideal subset of customers where the firm can consistently deliver superior value (Reichheld, 1996). It was pointed out that it is critically important to establish an evaluation system for determining customer satisfaction by surveying customers directly as managers can use research results in identifying their own organisational strengths and weaknesses (Olga et al 2003) An evaluation system can include the following:

1. Identify how well the business process is working.
2. Know where to make changes to create improvements.
3. Determine if the changes led to improvements (Olga et al 2003).

Steps for Managing Customer Satisfaction

It is a well known fact that no business exists without customers. In the business of telecommunications, it is important to work closely with customers to make sure the service being provided is as close to their requirements as can be managed.

Maguire & Koh (2006) identified seven steps in managing customer satisfaction as follows:

1. Encourage face-to-face dealings

It is important to meet customers face to face at least one or even twice during the course of a project.

This might be the most daunting and downright part of interacting with the customer, but have tendency of assuming a good experience with customers.

2. *Respond to messages promptly and keep clients informed*

Meeting the information needs of customers to reduce anxiety is the reason for this step. It might really not be easy to meet the problem of the customer right away but all the same, the customer must be aware that his or her problem is being worked on

3. *Be friendly and approachable*

Being friendly and courteous towards customers is very important. It is very vital to keep a clear head, respond to clients' wishes as best as possible and at all times remain polite and courteous.

4. *Have a clearly defined customer service policy*

A clearly defined customer service policy saves a lot of time and effort in the long-run. It explains the solutions to anticipated customer problems. It spells out the various options available to the firm to use in solving customer concerns to ensure total customer management and care.

5. *Attention to Detail*

In order to make your customer feel welcome, wanted and valued, a firm needs to pay attention to every aspect of customer needs and expectation. Sending goodwill messages to clients will make them feel important and valued.

6. *Anticipate your clients needs and go out of your way to help them out*

This involves achieving supreme level of understanding of clients to enhance good working relationship.

7. *Honour your promises*

This is the most important point in the steps conveying a simple message: when you promise, deliver.

Clients do not like to be disappointed even though it is sometimes paramount that you might miss the deadline unintentionally. This can stem from projects being late, technology failure and the inability of contractors to deliver on time. A quick apology and assurance are required when customers are disappointed (Maguire & Koh 2006).

Multiple Customer Listening Tools

To a limited degree, the literature identifies some customer listening tools including: relationship surveys, transaction surveys, customer complaints, total market survey, focus groups, and observation.

Relationship vs. Transaction Surveys

The literature has long debated the most appropriate conceptualisation of customer satisfaction. Some researchers argue that satisfaction is a transaction specific emotion resulting from the disconfirmation of expectation model Olga et al (2003). In this manner, satisfaction is the result of a specific interaction with the vender. In contrast, other researchers have conceptualised and measured satisfaction as a global construct, being the result of many previous interactions with a specific vender Olga et al (2003). Recently, researchers have accepted both views of satisfaction and have modeled satisfaction (Maguire & Koh 2006).

Better customer relationship management (CRM) means understanding the need of the customer and being able to listen to them and provide the expected services. To do this, it is important to keep in mind that overall relationship surveys and transaction surveys are complementary rather than competing concepts (Maguire & Koh 2006). Maguire & Koh (2006) suggested that each survey needs to be standardized so that results can be combined and synthesized for better understanding. To accomplish this task, both surveys should have the following identical characteristics: overall survey format, question formats, measurement scales, number of scale points, and exact wording of attributes, sub-attributes, and overall performance questions. Surveys should be as consistent as possible with the overall relationship survey asking about overall perceptions and the transaction survey directed towards a specific interaction.

Customer Complaints

Early in the total quality management (TQM) movement, collection of customer compliant data was the primary method of listening to customers (Maguire & Koh (2006)). Today, gathering customer complaints is a standard practice for most companies. Research has shown that effective handling of customer complaints has a dramatic impact on customer retention and loyalty (Singh and Wilkes, 1996). Collecting customer complaint data is common practice in many companies and has received substantial research attention.

Research has focused on processes to handle complaints (Homburg and Bettina, 2001), the customer's experience (Smith et al., 1999), analysis of complaint data (Blodgett et al., 1995), and the relationship to important business outcomes. The biggest challenge is that only a small percentage of dissatisfied customers actually complain. Vavra (1997) pointed out that only 5% of all customers who have a problem actually voice it to management. Hence, Blodgett et al. (1995) suggested that service providers should encourage customers who are dissatisfied to complain and seek redress, so that the firm has a chance to remedy the problems and retain those customers.

Garver (2002) believed that relationship and transaction surveys along with customer compliant data are the cornerstone of any systematic programme designed to listen to customers.

Focus Groups and Observation

Focus groups are commonly used in practice and have received a considerable amount of attention. They are most often used to understand customer expectations and to determine the importance of product attributes. More advanced users will employ them on the back end of surveys to add insight into quantitative results With more complex offerings, focus groups are also used to gain in-depth evaluation of the offering (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Best Practices on Increasing Customer Satisfaction

Customers have greater choice than ever and are not willing to accept sub-standard products or services. They have become more educated and expect higher standards of customer care through their experiences and the provision of superior service by leading customer-orientated companies (Thornton 2001). All best-practice companies are spending more on looking for innovative ways to maintain and satisfy existing customers. They believed that customers' perceptions will be influenced by how they feel they are treated. The challenge is how to succeed in making the customer feel really special and valued and looked after by them. Thus superior customer care is important for keeping the existing customer.

The following typical best practices are generated from different world-class companies, and have been confirmed as making a significant contribution to increasing customer satisfaction and enhancing companies' performance in this field.

Employee satisfaction with intrinsic and spiritual character is the source of excellent quality and customer satisfaction. World-class companies see their front-line and staff support people as valuable and reliable resources that are equal in importance to customers for quickly and efficiently finding out how the organisation is performing in the marketplace.

Conclusions

Observing best practice and current experiences from large organisations interested in improving their knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding the management of customer satisfaction has produced a number of interesting results. Measuring customer satisfaction identifies ways of improving product or service quality, which in turn leads to increased competitive advantage (Ming-Change Lee 2006).

Increasing customer satisfaction and CRM have become the main focus of many firms to boost repeat business and benefit from positive word-of-mouth, thus increasing long-term profitability. As a result, increasing customer satisfaction is an important goal in business practice today. Measurement of satisfaction is becoming increasingly common, and customer satisfaction and relationships research are by far the most popular means of gathering customer feedback. Since customer tastes and requirements are always changing, a major part of the quality effort must be devoted using listening as a tool in managing customer satisfaction.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The research questions addressed in the presentation and analysis of data are: How does Kasapa Telecom Limited, use listening as a tool for obtaining information about customer needs, preferences and perception of performance from customers? What best practices are available to Kasapa Telecom Limited for managing customer perception and satisfaction? What are the challenges facing Kasapa Telecom Limited, in providing quality services and products to meet customer satisfaction? And what can Kasapa Telecom Limited do with information it gathers through listening to customers to improve quality of service and customer satisfaction.

Use of Listening Tools to Obtain Information about Customer Needs, Preferences and Perception of Performance

Under this sub-heading of the presentation and analysis of data addressed the question: 'How does customer relations/satisfaction management use listening as a tool to obtain information about customer needs, preferences and perception of performance from customers?' The main tools for listening to obtain information about customers are; relationship survey, dissatisfaction survey, critical activity survey, customer complaints records, benchmarking, lost of customers and why survey, employee feedback, customer visits, focus groups and the use of observation.

When the staff and management of Kasapa were asked which of the listening tools mentioned above they were familiar with as tools for obtaining information about customer needs, preferences and perception 36.7 % of them stated they were familiar with customer complaints, 16.7 % for customer visits, 10 % for employee feedback whilst only 3.3 % were familiar with benchmarking as a tool for obtaining information on customer needs and preferences as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Familiarity with listening tools among Staff of Kasapa

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Relationship survey	3	10.0	27.3
Dissatisfaction survey	2	6.7	18.2
Critical Activity survey	2	6.7	18.2
Customer complaints	11	36.7	100.0
Benchmarking	1	3.3	9.1
Employee feedback	3	10.0	27.3
Customer visits	5	16.7	45.5
Observation	3	10.0	27.3
Total responses	30	100.0	272.7
0 missing cases; 11 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

When staff and management of Kasapa Telecom Limited Ho, were asked which of the listening tools they employed most in obtaining information from customers, it was revealed that Customer complaints and Customer visits each recorded 21.3 %, relationship survey recorded 14.9 % , employee feedback recorded 12.8 %, whilst benchmarking recorded 2.1 % as stated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Rating of Effectiveness of listening Tools among staff of Kasapa

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Relationship survey	7	14.9	63.6
Dissatisfaction survey	4	8.5	36.4
Critical Activity survey	1	2.1	9.1
Customer complaints	10	21.3	90.9
Benchmarking	1	2.1	9.1
Lost and why survey	2	4.3	18.2
Employee feedback	6	12.8	54.5
Customer visits	10	21.3	90.9
Focus group	2	4.3	18.2
Observation	4	8.5	36.4
Total responses	47	100.0	427.3
0 missing cases; 11 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

The research has revealed benchmarking and critical activity survey as the least used tools for gathering information from customers by Kasapa Telecom Limited as indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3 Application of Standard Deviation Tests to Listening Tools

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Relationship survey	3	1.33	.577	1	2
Dissatisfaction survey	3	2.33	1.528	1	4
Critical Activity Survey	3	2.67	1.528	1	4
Customer complaints	3	1.33	.577	1	2
Benchmarking	3	2.67	1.528	1	4
Lost and why survey	3	2.67	1.528	1	4
Employee feedback	3	2.00	1.732	1	4
Customer visits	3	1.33	.577	1	2
Focus group	3	2.67	1.528	1	4
Observation	3	2.00	1.000	1	3

Source: Field Data, May 2009

When standards deviation test was applied to the responses received on effectiveness of the use of listening tools for getting information, it became clear that relationship survey, customer complaints and customer visits had the least standard deviation of .577 each which is less than one (1). This means they recorded the less deviation from the standard deviation of one (1). By implication, Kasapa Telecom Limited used relationship survey, customer complaints and customer visits as the most effective listening tools for collecting information from its customers about their needs, preferences and perception about the quality of services as indicated in Table 4.3.

On the contrary, dissatisfaction survey, critical activity survey, lost and why survey and benchmarking all recorded standard deviation of 1.528 each whilst employee feedback recorded standard deviation of 1.732. This means these tools of listening were the least effectively used of all the listening tools employed by Kasapa during the period as contained in Table 4.3.

Table 4.4 Rating of the Effective use of Relationship Survey

Relationship survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	3	27.3	33.3	33.3
	Very Good	4	36.4	44.4	77.8
	Good	2	18.2	22.2	100.0
	Total	9	81.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	18.2		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Relationship survey as a tool for listening recorded 27.3 % excellent use as indicated in Table 4.4, whilst dissatisfaction survey as a tool for listening recorded 18.2 % very good as stated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Rating of the Effective use of Dissatisfaction Survey

Dissatisfaction survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	1	9.1	25.0	25.0
	Very Good	2	18.2	50.0	75.0
	Average	1	9.1	25.0	100.0
	Total	4	36.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	63.6		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Table 4.6 Rating of the Effective use of Critical Activity Survey

Critical Activity Survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	1	9.1	33.3	33.3
	Good	1	9.1	33.3	66.7
	Average	1	9.1	33.3	100.0
	Total	3	27.3	100.0	
Missing	System	8	72.7		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Critical activity survey as a tool for gathering information from customers recorded 9.1 % each for excellent, very good and good as indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.7 Rating of the Effective use of Customer Complaints Survey

Customer complaints

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	7	63.6	63.6	63.6
	Very Good	4	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	11	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data May 2009

The use of customer complaints as an effectiveness a tool for listening recorded 63.6 % excellent and 36. 4 % for very good. This implies the use of customer complaints as a tool for listening is the most effective method employed by Kasapa Telecom Limited as stated in Table 4.7

Table 4.8 Rating of the Effective use of Benchmarking Survey

Benchmarking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	1	9.1	33.3	33.3
	Good	1	9.1	33.3	66.7
	Average	1	9.1	33.3	100.0
	Total	3	27.3	100.0	
Missing	System	8	72.7		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data May 2009

Benchmarking as earlier pointed out, recorded the least effectiveness as a tool for getting information from customers as indicated in Table 4.8.

Table 4.9 Rating of the Effective use of Lost and Why Survey

Lost and why survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	1	9.1	25.0	25.0
	Good	2	18.2	50.0	75.0
	Average	1	9.1	25.0	100.0
	Total	4	36.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	63.6		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Lost and why survey recorded 9.1 % excellent and 18.2 % very good as a tools for getting information from customers as contained in Table 4.9.

Table 4.10 Rating of the Effective use Employee Feedback Survey

Employee feedback

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	3	27.3	33.3	33.3
	Very Good	2	18.2	22.2	55.6
	Good	3	27.3	33.3	88.9
	Average	1	9.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	9	81.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	18.2		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data May 2009

The use of employee feedback as a tool for listening to customers for gathering information recorded 27.3 % excellent for effectiveness, 18.2 % as very good and another 27.3 % as good.

Table 4.11 Rating of the Effective use of Customer Visits Survey

Customer visits

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	5	45.5	45.5	45.5
	Very Good	4	36.4	36.4	81.8
	Good	2	18.2	18.2	100.0
	Total	11	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, May 2009

One of the best used tools for listening to customers by Kasapa Telecom Limited is the resort to customer visits. Customer visits recorded 45.5 % excellent, 36.4 % very good and 18.2 % good in rating as a tool for gathering information from customers by the Company as indicated in Table 4.11.

Table 4.12 Rating of the Effective use of Focus Group Survey

Focus group

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	1	9.1	20.0	20.0
	Good	3	27.3	60.0	80.0
	Average	1	9.1	20.0	100.0
	Total	5	45.5	100.0	
Missing	System	6	54.5		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Focused group, recorded 27.3 % good and 9.1 % excellent rating in effectiveness as a tool for gathering information on customer needs, preferences and perception of the performance of Kasapa Telecom Limited.

Table 4.13 Rating of the Effective use of Observation Survey

Observation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	2	18.2	25.0	25.0
	Very Good	2	18.2	25.0	50.0
	Good	3	27.3	37.5	87.5
	Average	1	9.1	12.5	100.0
	Total	8	72.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	27.3		
Total		11	100.0		

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Observation recorded 18.2 % each for excellent and very good and 27.3 % good in rating for effectiveness as a tool for gathering information by the Company. From the discussions, it has become clear that Kasapa uses several listening tools in gathering information about customer needs, preferences and perception. The Company used relationship survey, customer complaints and customer visits as the most effective listening tools for collecting information from its customers about their needs, preferences and perception about the quality of services, whilst dissatisfaction survey, critical activity survey, lost and why survey and benchmarking were the least effectively used tools for gathering information on customer needs and perception of quality of service rendered by Kasapa.

Best Practices for Managing Customer Perception and Satisfaction

All best-practice companies spend more on looking for innovative ways to maintain and satisfy existing customers. They believe that customers' perceptions would be influenced by the way they are treated. The

challenge is, would Kasapa succeed in making its customers feel really special and valued in order to remain loyal to the Company? Superior customer care is important for keeping the trust and loyalty of existing customers.

Kasapa Telecom Limited Ho, has deployed certain measures, like the use of suggestion boxes; filling of customer complaint forms; number of visits (repeat purchases); comment cards; personal contacts with customers; monitoring of Internet chart groups as best practices strategies for managing its customer relationship. Among the best practice strategies available to Kasapa Limited, the most used ones were personal contacts with customers (36.8 %), suggestions box (31.6 %) and the filling of complaint forms (15.8 %), whilst the least used best practice strategy was comment cards which recorded (5.3 %) as indicated in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Most used Best Practices for Managing Customer Perception

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Suggestion Box	6	31.6	54.5
Filling of customer complaint forms	3	15.8	27.3
Number of visits(Repeat purchase)	2	10.5	18.2
Comment cards	1	5.3	9.1
Personal contacts with customers	7	36.8	63.6
Total responses	19	100.0	172.7
0 missing cases; 11 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

With respect to the effectiveness of these best practice strategies, the use of suggestion boxes recorded 29.0 % rating in effectiveness, personal contact with customers recorded 25.8 %, whilst the filling of complaint forms recorded 22.6 % effectiveness use as a best practice strategy for managing customer perception and satisfaction as indicated in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Most Effective Best Practices for Managing Customer Perception

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Suggestion Box	9	29.0	81.8
Filling of customer complaint forms	7	22.6	63.6
Number of visits(Repeat purchase)	5	16.1	45.5
Comment cards	2	6.5	18.2
Personal contacts with customers	8	25.8	72.7
Total responses	31	100.0	281.8
0 missing cases; 11 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Best practice tool of listening was used by Kasapa to obtain information about customers' needs, preferences, and perceptions of performance. The organisation finds itself in an increasingly competitive Ghanaian business environment where other telecommunication companies are struggling to increase their market shares. This competitive business environment has compelled Kasapa to resort to the use of best practice strategies to manage its customer relationship. The study revealed that use of best practice strategies like personal contact with customers, filling of complaint forms and the fillings of customer complaint forms were the most effective best practice strategies employed by the Company as indicated in Table 4.16.

Challenges Facing Kasapa Telecom Limited in the Provision of Quality Service and Products to meet Customer Satisfaction

Kasapa claims it benchmarks its performance with other competitors in the telecommunication industry in Ghana continuously in order to be abreast with the challenges facing the industry. This is a defensive strategy to ensure that they are not lagging behind their competitors in terms of technological advancement, financing, training and development of staff, customer relation management, market shares and maximisation of profits for shareholders.

Table 4.16: Challenges Facing Kasapa in the Provision of Quality Service

Response	Freq	% age	Cases
Competition among players in the industry	9	31.0	81.8
Technology(types and rate of change)	7	24.1	63.6
Financing	4	13.8	36.4
Human Resource(calibre and conditions)	3	10.3	27.3
Customer relation/Satisfaction Management	6	20.7	54.5
Total responses	29	100.0	263.6
0 missing cases; 11 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

In the opinion of staff and management of Kasapa Telecom Limited the greatest challenge facing the Company is competition among players in the telecommunication industry (31.0 %), type and rate of technological change

(24.1 %) and customer relation and satisfaction management (20.7 %). Ironically Kasapa does not consider the hiring of the right calibre of staff and creating conducive conditions for them as a great challenge as it recorded only 10. 3 % as indicated in Table 4.16.

Table 4.17: Reasons for Choosing Kasapa by Customers

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Expertise/Technical excellence	36	20.1	23.8
Value for money	76	42.5	50.3
Customer Service	40	22.3	26.5
Previous experience with Kasapa	11	6.1	7.3
Personal contact	16	8.9	10.6
Total responses	179	100.0	118.5
23 missing cases; 151 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Views of Kasapa Customers, on the use of listening as a tool, indicate that 'value for money' (42.5%) is the most significant reason from customer-point-of–view on the choice and use of Kasapa Telecom Limited, followed by 'customer service' which represents 22.3% of the responses and the least is 'previous experience with Kasapa' which is accounted to 6.1% of the total responses.

Table 4.18: Most used Listening Tools by Kasapa in the opinion of Customers

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Relationship survey	88	27.4	56.8
Dissatisfaction survey	34	10.6	21.9
Customer visit	72	22.4	46.5
Focus group	50	15.6	32.3
Observation	77	24.0	49.7
Total responses	321	100.0	207.1
19 missing cases; 155 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

According the customers of Kasapa whose opinions were sampled, the most used tools for gathering information on customer needs, preferences and perception of performance rating were relationship survey (27.4 %), observation (24 %), and customer visits (22.4 %). The least used tool was dissatisfaction survey (10.6 %).

Table 4.19: Best Practice Strategies Used by Kasapa from the Perspective of Customers

Response	Freq	% age	Cases
Suggestion box	13	7.4	8.0
Filling of customer complaint forms	42	24.0	25.8
Comment cards	9	5.1	5.5
Personal contact	111	63.4	68.1
Total responses	175	100.0	107.4
11 missing cases; 163 valid cases			

Source: Field Data, May 2009

Customer complaints, customer visits, focus groups and observation are the listening tools directly employed by Kasapa to collect information on customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction at different stages of their service life cycle. Of the available best practice strategies, according to customers, the use of personal contacts recorded the highest of 63.4 %, followed by the filling of customer complaints forms which recorded 24.0 % whilst the use of comment cards recorded the least with 5.1 %. This corresponds with the finding on staff and management on the use of best practice strategies.

Table 4.20: Preferred Communication Network among Kasapa Subscribers

Responses	Freq	% age	Cases
Kasapa	127	43.5	73.8
MTN	89	30.5	51.7
Vodafone	34	11.6	19.8
Tigo	31	10.6	18.0
Zain	11	3.8	6.4

Source: Field Data, May 2009

When respondents were asked to rank their preferred telecommunication network, 43.5 % opted for Kasapa, 30.5 % preferred MTN, 11.6 % selected Vodafone, whilst the least preferred among them was Zain with 3.8 % as indicated in Table 4.20.

Table 4.21: Assessment of Service Quality and Satisfaction by Customers of Kasapa

Indicators	Frequency	Percent
I strongly agree	84	48.3
I agree	40	23.0
I disagree	2	1.1
I strongly disagree	6	3.4
I do not know	10	5.7
Total	142	81.6

Source of Data: Field Work May 2009

The use of information gathered through listening to customers for improving quality service and customer satisfaction

When respondents were asked 'How in their opinion, listening to customers can be used as a tool for improving customer satisfaction' the following were some of the responses received: The customers of Kasapa were of the opinion that they were in the best position to point out shortcomings in quality of services being provided by the Company for improvement. They also pointed out that contacting customers for feedback on the quality of service being rendered by Kasapa was an important strategy for managing customer relations and urged the management of the Company to take the necessary measures to meet customer expectation and complaints. Customers emphasesd that handling customer complains with much seriousness and seeking their view on how things should be done should not be an event, but a continuous process. They noted that Kasapa could improve service delivery by identifying customer needs and by explaining all technical problems affecting the quality of service to them. Customers contented that listening to the customer; Kasapa can directly know exactly what the customers feel and experiences.

Customer further pointed out that customer information should be treated with care and the necessary action taken on them. Customers noted that since they buy what they want; listening to them helps the Company to know what they want. Customers stated that listening can be used for identifying the major problems facing customers and for developing innovative ways to solve them. Listening in their opinion, enables customer complaints to reach management for solution to guarantee the satisfaction of customer needs and maximisation of profit.

Customers noted that listening to them can be used as a tool for improving the quality of customer service and satisfaction because the customer would be able to express himself or herself in any language to the service provider. Listening to customers is a very important tool for fighting customer complaints according to the customers. The customers contented that when they lodge complains and the Company listens attentively to them, it gives room for tackling problems to improve company-customer relations. Listening to customers would make the Company aware of the customer's needs and requirements and enable the Company to know the importance of customers' expectations and devise means to satisfy them accurately.

Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that:

1. Kasapa Telecom Limited, uses listening to obtain information about customer needs, preferences and perceptions of their performance. The most effective tools for listening that the Company uses are addressing customer complaints and making customer visits. The least used and the least effective listening tool employed by Kasapa were benchmarking and critical activity survey.

2. Kasapa employed certain best practice strategies to manage customer perception and satisfaction. The most prevalent and most effective were the use of suggestion boxes and personal contacts with customers, whilst the least used best practice strategy was comment cards.

3. The greatest challenge facing the Company, in the opinion of staff and management, is competition from rival players in the telecommunication industry in Ghana.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Kasapa Telecom Limited, Ho, should intensify the use of benchmarking and critical activity survey as listening tools for competitive advantage in the telecommunication industry.

2. The Company should radicalize the use of comment cards as a best practice strategy for managing customer perception and satisfaction because it is cheaper, more effective and easy to administer.

3. The Company should invest in advanced technology and prioritise the attraction and retention of the right

calibre of staff as a means getting competitive advantage in the telecommunication industry in Ghana.

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