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Research paper



Customers' Perception on Service Quality in Commercial Records Centre

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Abstract

Service quality and customer satisfaction were important elements that businesses need to consider and to ensure they keep on competitive in their business. There is a need to measure these dimensions and to know how it effect the consumers' perceptions for better understanding of their needs and hence giving the best service to satisfy them. It is important for the Commercial Records Centre (CRC) to have a good service quality in order to sustain their loyalty of their customers. It is very crucial for CRC to evaluate the performance of their services rendered to their customers, due to the fact that satisfied customers in most cases are likely to become loyal to companies. Thus, the aim of this case study is to determine customers' perceptions on the service quality in one of the CRC in Shah Alam, Selangor Malaysia. Quantitative method is used to conduct the survey. Modified SERVQUAL questionnaire with the requirement standard from MS ISO 11799 (2011), Information and Documentation - Document Storage Requirements for Archive and Library Materials were used to assess the CRC customers or respondents' perceptions of service quality according to five quality dimensions. From the findings, the most important factor that their customers emphasis from the most important to the least important was Assurance, Reliability, Tangibility, Responsiveness, Empathy. It is proven that, customers' perception has a relationship or influence with five dimensions in SERVQUAL Model. This is only one finding of a case study. Different CRC will definitely have different findings from the customers perception.

Keywords: *Commercial Records Centre, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Customers' Perception*

1. Introduction

Commercial Record Center (CRC) is typically an off-site storage that store or manage regularly inactive records by having and using a much more interactive, high-tech services and relationship with its clients. It manages and store records including electronic formats of other organizations and provides services for profit and fee basis. It also provides high density storage for paper records and some offer climate-controlled storage for sensitive non-paper and critical (vital) paper media.

There is some possible vagueness or misperception when describing off-site definitions or concepts or methods based on various professional field [1]:

- Cooperative storage - basically it is the sharing of a space within the facility.
- Collaborative storage – it indicates a shared approach to the collection in terms of growth, shape, management and access [2].
- Depository – a space that been shared or cooperative storage facility where the depositing organizations retain ownership of the materials [3].
- Repository – sometimes called a last-copy repository. It is a facility serving a regional area or a group of participating organizations where ownership of the materials transfers their materials to the repository.

CRC is basically an institution that offer various services to customers in the field of information management particularly for records management needs such as:

- Records Storage – Hybrid Records Management, File Room Management, Document Preservation, Legal Records Management, Medical Records Management, Records Retention and Information Management
- Data center - Technology Escrow
- Scan/Digitization - Scan on Demand, Business Process Digitization, Document Imaging, Image Archiving
- Shredding – Paper, Religious Book, Mobile Shredding, Off-site Shredding, Media Destruction
- Courier - Carton Pick-up and Delivery.
- Consultation and Training - Disaster Recovery, Project Management

In Malaysia, MS ISO 11799 (2011), Information and Documentation - Document Storage Requirements for Archive and Library Materials (ISO 11799:2003 (2008), IDT) were the standards that gives guideline to this storage facilities [4].

This Malaysian Standard (MS) is identical with ISO 11799:2003 (2008), Information and documentation - Document storage requirements for archive and library materials, published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) [5].

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CRC can be considered as service industry or information industry since dealing with records and information services to clients where they act to facilitate the storage and customer's records keeping. Utilizing some of the latest technologies, CRCs now can offer a very sophisticated computer-based services such as Radio-frequency identification (RFID), Global Positioning System (GPS), Cloud storage or data center, indexing, file tracking, fireproof vault storage of computer media, electronic vaulting of customers' data, disaster recovery, and contingency planning programs, as well as a number of other new services such as training and consultation and also some other products [6]. CRCs in Malaysia also can explore new line of business in destruction of Islamic religious book such as old Quran. This is because the destruction of Quran and Islamic religious book need to be done appropriately and accordingly with the Syariah law or Syariah compliance. Good and various quality service attracts more and better customers to the business which, in turn, leads to increased profits [7]. Harris believes that customers in the 21st. century are more sophisticated in the way they search for and make purchases [8]. They want some freedom and stress-free experiences in managing their records that are user friendly and can customize their choice.

2. CRC in Malaysia and Service Quality

Interest in service quality has grown over the last decade due to increasing competition, which has led managers in finding ways to improve profitability. Contrary to predictions that the paperless office is on the horizon and will put a record out of business, CRC industry is alive and well and continues to grow. It's growing, not only in the ability to provide better and faster service to customer's hardcopy of softcopy but growing in its capacity to customers who require services related to records management. In CRC, it must be secure, clean, efficient and economical. There has been 17 CRC in Malaysia since the first company setup in 1973. Previously CRC were known to involve in logistic whereby the goods (or documents) where been stored temporarily in warehouse and were transported to various locations [9-10]. Between 2016-2017, Iron Mountain Incorporated as the largest CRC in the world has completed its acquisition of Recall, Prism and Santa Fe indicating that there is a potential growth in this business in Malaysia.

CRC in Malaysia noted about the need of observing customer perception and high-quality records management service they serve. They have begun to search an alternative way in order to satisfy their client on the basis of service quality. The needed information is to help them monitor and improve their services and equipment to meet customers' expectations. Various challenges need to be address and need to be handled such as competencies of staff, location and construction of the building, equipment and installation, customer services, usage and maintenance, disaster-control plan etc.

Hyman [11] indicated that, the one common factor associated with all successful records center is their dedication to customer service. Service quality is regarded as impartial but, the best form of silent marketing whose impact and results are so quick to manifest [12]. Hence, CRC need to have good service quality to sustain their loyalty of their customers. One of the effective and efficient strategies is by knowing customers' perception because service quality attracts more and influence customers' behavior which ultimately affects the profitability of a business [13]. In Malaysia, all CRC service were been monitored by the National Archive of Malaysia under Audit and Inspectorate Section for it's compliant in managing records stored in their facility such as using MS ISO 11799 (2011), Information And Documentation - Document Storage Requirements For Archive And Library Materials (ISO 11799:2003 (2008), IDT) etc. There are also other Malaysian Standard that focus on records management which is:

- MS 2223-1: 2009 Information and Documentation-Records Management- Part 1: General
- MS 2223-2: 2009 Information and Documentation-Records Management- Part 2: Guidelines
- MS ISO 11799: 2011 Information and documentation-Document storage requirements for archive and library materials
- MS ISO 16175-1: 2012 Information and Documentation Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environment: Overview and Statement of Principles
- MS ISO 16175-2: 2012 Information and documentation-Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environments-Part 2: Guidelines and Functional Requirements for Digital Records Management Systems
- MS ISO 16175-3: 2012 Information and documentation-Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environments - Part 3: Guidelines and Functional Requirements for Records in Business Systems
- MS 2473: 2012 Information and documentation-Implementation Guidelines for Digitization of Records



Fig.1: CRC in Malaysia

Other ISO in records management that also been used as a source of reference is:

- ISO 23081-1: 2006-Information and Documentation-Records. Management Processes-Metadata for Records-Part 1: Principles.
- ISO 23081-2: 2009-Information and Documentation-Managing Metadata for Records-Part 2: Conceptual and Implementation Issues.
- ISO/TR 23081-3: 2011-Information and Documentation-Managing Metadata for Records-Part 3: Self-assessment Method.
- ISO 30300: 2011-Information and Documentation-Management Systems for Records-Fundamentals and Vocabulary.
- ISO 30301: 2011-Information and Documentation-Management Systems for Records-Requirements.
- ISO 30302: 2011-Information and Documentation-Guidelines for Implementation.

MS ISO was act as guide for the accountability process so that the records can be proven as source of evidence that focus on authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability.

3. Methodology

This case study focuses on determining the degree of customers' perceptions on service quality of one CRC in Shah Alam based on five service dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL) [14-15] with the recommendation in MS ISO 11799 (2011), Information and documentation-Document storage requirements for Archive and Library Materials. In doing so, this study has embarked the following objectives; to determine customers' perceptions on the service quality of CRC, Shah Alam and to determine the most desired of service quality that influence the customers' degree satisfaction in CRC.

To examine the objectives, there are five hypotheses provided to be tested, which were Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Responsiveness and Empathy will have a significant impact on customers' perception.

4. Problem Statement

Today's CRC continue to diversify and expand service offerings to accommodate the growing needs of their clients [16]. However, CRC industry in Malaysia has received little research attention from a service quality perspective [9] or CRC did collect their customer perception but in a very basic findings due to the fact that all CRC are bound with the confidentiality issues of their customer records and cannot be expose to public. To know customers perception, the organization needs to collect the information about customer perception and expectation toward service quality to avoid fail in providing customers need and requirement where it can help in developing strategies that lead to customer satisfaction. On this basis, customers' perception on service quality of CRC is being choose in this study, to know how customers perceive the service quality in CRC in order to improve the services that always been the significant demand from the customers.

Responsiveness

In certain small workplaces that are without the most basic knowledge, workplace parties are limited in their ability to identify and discuss hazards and preparations in managing record centre. The Occupational Health and Safety Act define the roles and responsibilities of various workplace parties in establishing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. If the workplace parties are not aware of, or do not understand these roles and responsibilities, the ability to function cannot be compromised. For example, workers still do not understand the safety procedures when it comes in managing boxes that contained important files.

Reliability

The transport which staff uses for the delivery is not working properly because it's rarely maintained and it's hard for the staff to make a service delivery. Several challenges that faced by the CRC need an action or solution taken immediately, CRC should concern on ways to prevent or avoid all issues before it becomes problems and risk to their business. CRC should intervene to focus on the strategies in probing this issue internally without been notice by the customer. Customer will always be asked to measure their perception on the service quality that they provided because perception of customers towards service quality may give an effect to the business.

Assurance

CRC also faces some key technological issues such as some of the most vital decision-support documents are in the form of multimedia computer (audio, video, slide presentations and spreadsheets), which have assumptions embedded within the electronic version that are not easily amenable for printing. The problems related to saving such important types of records are typically not addressed, and so the records are lost. Also, workstation and scanner for heavy duty work to scan files is still lacking.

Tangibility

Security, space, fee and service is the factors why some company outsource their records management [17]. There are questions on how safe their records will be, how fast can they retrieve them if they need to, or do they have to pick them up themselves. For security reason, the physical records arrive at the premises in bar coded boxes. Staff will not know their content nor whom they belong to. These are all kept in random, again for security reason [18]. The contracting out of services previously delivered by government to provide operators brings a new dimension to the chain of accountability. The insertion of an intermediary between government and citizen can confuse responsibility and allow buck-passing if the service is unsatisfactory or a person is harmed or disadvantaged by the contractor's action. The management of inactive records for private sector to outsource their records management should be considered thoroughly. Based on intense competition exist in CRC, the companies need to search and find out what are the strategies need to be taken in order to sustain the business. Not only by providing the advance product with latest technology equipment, but the companies need to find out the way or strategies that can gain and attract customers trust. As been claimed by Harris,[8] providing a product or service alone is not enough in today's competitive economic environment.

Empathy

Some internal issues were found such as personality conflicts, supervisor issues, employees losing motivation, team commitment, and dissatisfaction of staff with the actions taken and company structure oriented. Management aware the cause of such problems but sometimes misunderstanding and miscommunication need to be put aside first due to lack of staff and time constrain when dealing with new project [19]. The Records Manager should analyse and evaluate the services been offered by the existing CRC [20]. In competitive business, the customer loyalty is needed in order to survive and sustain in business. The loyalty nurtured when the organization gives good and satisfied services to customer, however, there are no study have been done in Malaysia regarding on CRC [21] compared to other country such as Indonesia for example, research done by Nanulaita [17].

5. Literature Review

CRC industry is alive and well continues to grow since many companies are experiencing a significant increase in the volume of inactive record. CRC industry in Malaysia have developed and succeeded over the past few years where CRC has expanded more customers since the company provide the advanced services with latest technological equipment and standardize practices to meet their customers' expectations of service quality. This is very important for their sustenance and growth since the industry is rapidly growing worldwide [21]. Business Records Management asserts that CRC are one of the businesses that exist in almost every community that generally provide service to government, corporate or firm, organizational clients and other professional records management services [22].

Rockpulkit [23] defines service quality is an approach to manage business processes in order to ensure full satisfaction of the customers and quality in service provided while Sahil [24] stated that, service quality is an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations where service business operators often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify problems, and to better assess client satisfaction. Therefore, from the existing literature, it is important to conduct or administer systematic research to measure the customer perception on service quality in CRC since in Malaysia there are no study have been conducted regarding service quality.

Reliability

Reliability can be defined as ability of CRC to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. This is achieved through keeping promises to do something, providing right service, consistency of performance and dependability, service is performed right at the first time, the company keeps its promises in accuracy in billing and keeping records correctly, available merchandise and error-free sales transactions and records. Not only that, reliability also consists of accurate order fulfilment; accurate record; accurate quote; accurate in billing; accurate calculation of commissions; keep services promise [25]. Reliability is largely concerning whether the outcome of service delivery was as promised [26].

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the dimension that CRC emphasizes on attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customer requests, questions, complaints and problems. The desire and willingness to assist customers and deliver prompt service where it may involve features such as the opening hours of the service provider, the politeness of the employees and the time the customer has to wait in order to get the service [25]. It can be described on how quickly and affective the response to the customer is. Similar opinion with Kumar, Kee and Manshor [27], responsiveness also contains understanding needs and wants of the customers, convenient operating hours, staff attention to problems and customers' safety in their transaction. In this context of the study responsive refer to how CRC being willing to help the customers such as to answer customers request, question and problems.

Assurance

Assurance construct consists of competence (possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service), courtesy (consideration for the customer's property, clean and neat appearance of public contact personnel), credibility and security of the employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.[26]

Tangibility

Tangibility relates to the physical aspects or evidence of a service.[26] Physical aspects of retailer include completeness of equipment and fixtures, physical facilities, materials associated with the service, appearance of personnel and communication materials, Convenience of physical facilities and layouts.

Empathy

Empathy is the degree to which the customer feels that they been help and concern with that will cause the customer to either accept or reject the service encounter. The higher the level of empathy, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality.[26]
In CRC, there are many services been provided that need to measure their quality such as Off-site Storage, In-house Archiving Solution, Scanning and Digitization, Record Management Training and Consultancy Program.

MS ISO 11799: 2011 Information and Documentation - Document Storage Requirements for Archive and Library Materials

This Malaysian Standard focus on the discussion of the requirement for repositories used for the long-term storage of archive and library materials. It covers the requirement, design and construction of the storage area, the requirement of equipment and any installation to be used. It may be difficult to create and maintain ideal environments and conditions for the long-term storage of archive and library materials due to the differences on the weather conditions and climate change of certain country. This standard covers the area of:

Building Site

It should not be liable to subsidence or flooding, risk from earthquakes, tidal waves or landslides, fire or explosions in adjacent sites, attracts rodents, insects and other pests, emitting harmful gases, smoke, dust, polluted area, near any installation for target in an armed conflict. Special provision shall be made in the construction of the building to defend against these threats. It should also minimize the harmful effects of materials been exposure to sunlight with careful attention to landscaping and the site's microclimate.

Building Construction

The repository should secure against any kind of vandalism, burglary terrorism and theft. Climatic inertia that focuses on the repository designed is used to provide an accurate and stable internal environment, with minimum dependence on mechanical systems. Inner structure and load are design for a reason such as for fire safety and efficient climate control. Repository should be divided into compartments so that the walls (including doors), floors, ceilings between single rooms and compartments, and other areas of the building shall be constructed to prevent fire (and water) from spreading into a neighbouring unit.

Equipment and Installation

The repositories can also use the following International Standards whenever possible:
• ISO 12606: 1997 Cinematography - Care and preservation of magnetic audio recordings for motion pictures and television.
• ISO 18918: 2000 - Imaging materials - Processed photographic plates - Storage practices.
• ISO 18923: 2000 - Imaging materials - Polyester-base magnetic tape - Storage practices.
• ISO 18911: 2010 - Imaging materials - Processed safety photographic films - Storage practices.
• ISO 18920: 2011 - Imaging materials - Reflection prints - Storage practices.
• ISO 18925: 2013 - Imaging materials - Optical disc media - Storage practices.

Supply systems for electricity, gas, and water, shall not be located in or near a room in the repository, unless needed in that room for a specific function directly connected with the collections. Fire detection system shall be provided with a fire detection system connected to a central monitoring panel. Such a system shall respond automatically to the presence of fire by detecting smoke or other products of combustion. Monitored intruder-alarm system should be provided. Intensity, duration and spectral distribution of any illumination in a repository should be controlled to minimize damage. A repository room shall not be illuminated more than is

necessary for retrieval and replacement of documents, room inspection and cleaning. Ventilation and air quality that the repository shall be ventilated in such a way as to allow free circulation of air throughout, and to prevent a build-up of pockets of high relative humidity. Room climate in the repositories for archive and library materials should be kept at a cool temperature, ideally controlled in a building constructed according to the principles of climatic inertia. Furniture or equipment used shall have no sharp edges or corners, nor protrusions on the sides adjacent to the stored items and shall not damage documents upon contact.

Usage

Eating, drinking and smoking shall be strictly forbidden. For security reasons, telephone extensions or other communication systems should be present in each compartment of the repository. ISO 12606, ISO 18911, ISO 18918, ISO 18920, ISO 18923 and ISO 18925 can be used whenever possible to make sure the effective monitoring of the repository. Air-handling systems should be cleaned regularly to disinfect the repository and the cleaning agents used will not be damaging the materials. Protection of all materials depends on the condition and their active usage. Drawings, posters, maps and graphic art should be well maintained as single sheets and for large formats, it should be stored flat in protective enclosures such as boxes, drawers or custom housing. Individual folders were used to store single-sheet items that are large or fragile. Oversize materials may be rolled if the material is sufficiently strong to withstand rolling.

Plans for Disaster-Control

Risk-assessment and plan for disaster-preparedness related to the specific building and collections should be established. This is a requirement for a proper system of indefinite storage, and all staff should be aware of it.

Promotion and Exhibitions

If there are any promotions and exhibitions, the same requirements regarding room climate and security for materials in the repositories apply. Any promotion and exhibitions will put materials at high risk and should therefore be monitored to minimize the risk. But for CRC, normally they don't do any promotion or exhibition due to the confidential issues of their materials.

6. Finding and Discussion

In Figure 2, there are five independent variables in this study that represent five dimensions in SERVQUAL Model.

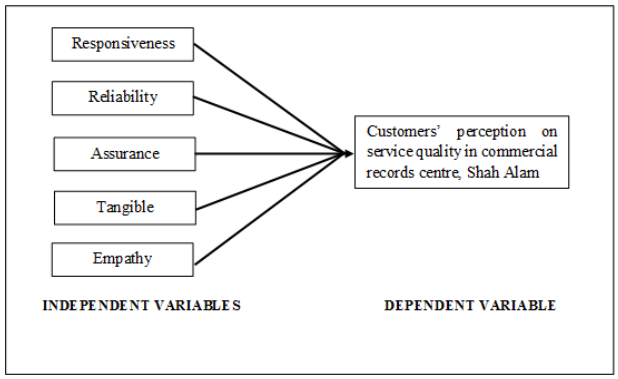


Fig. 2: Conceptual framework for customers' perceptions on service quality in CRC

Based on 97 questionnaires distributed to CRC, a total of 83 or 85.56% questionnaire were returned that consist of 8 from government, 3 from government-linked company and 86 from private company. As exhibited in Table 1, the highest response rate was from private sector (76.28%) followed by government sector (6.18%) and (3.10%) from government-linked company. Altogether, they were 83 usable questionnaires in this study.

Table 1.: Response rate

Agency	Total distributed	Total returned	%
Government	8	6	6.18%
Government-linked company	3	3	3.10%
Private	86	74	76.28

From the result finding, all five dimensions in SERVQUAL model are significantly influence to customers' perception in one of the CRCs. Based on the result, apparently among the five dimensions of SERVQUAL model, Assurance dimension has the strongest effect on customers' perception in CRC with the result of Pearson's r of 0.521 and p-value (sig.) is less than 0.01. Meanwhile, the other dimension Reliability was found to moderate positive correlate with the result of Pearson's (r = 0.447). Whereas, p-value is equal to 0.00. Tangibility show the result with the value Pearson's r of 0.437 and the p-value (sig.) is less than 0.01. While Responsiveness also show moderate positive correlation, which is 0.418 and p-value (sig.) is less than 0.01. Lastly, Empathy also have positive relationship with customers' perception but in low value compared to assurance with moderate positive correlation 0.404.

The correlation coefficient result does not reject other dimensions which also influencing the independent variables for this study. This statement strongly be supported by the result of correlation's coefficient where Assurance dimension place in the first ranking and the hypotheses is well supported based on the result. Yeo [28] stated that assurance in a service organization is determine by suitable guidance given to customers in all aspects where it can be found in employees' knowledge, courtesy and the ability of the organization and its employees to inspire trust and confidence of customers.

Since Assurance was conceptualized as the employees' knowledge and courtesy, and the ability to inspire trust and confidence, this finding indicated that the perception (Assurance) fall under the highest ranking in CRC because this dimension deal with high level of security, procedure of disposition records and provide professional and knowledgeable staff.

Table 2: Hypotheses Test for All Variables

Hypotheses	Coefficient	p-value	Supported
H1: Responsiveness have a significant impact on customers' perception	.418	P<0.05	YES
H2: Reliability have a significant impact on customers' perception	.447	P<0.05	YES
H3: Assurance have a significant impact on customers' perception	.521	P<0.05	YES
H4: Tangibility have a significant impact on customers' perception	.437	P<0.05	YES
H5: Empathy have a significant impact on customers' perception	.404	P<0.05	YES

Every record in CRC, whether for-profit, non-profit or governmental, possesses sensitive information of some type. It may be customer, employee, patient or other stakeholder-specific and could contain financial or other confidential information that must be legally or otherwise safeguarded by staff. Hence, the level of security must be maintained and carefully safeguarded. Staffs in CRC also need to have knowledge on records management especially staff that engage with the customers. By having knowledge with the field related, staff able to explain in detail to customers about the service and product offered such as the security element where the security were divided by three part which is custodial security, environmental security and access security. By this means, it can directly gain trust and confidence of customers to use their service. For example, CRC staff need to convince the customers about the high level of security service applied by them, how the maintenance of records are being maintain and how the procedure in disposition of the records provided. By adhere to the result finding, this statement strongly supported the studied CRC have provide good service to their customers.

7. Conclusions

Customers demand had forced all CRC to compete in order to satisfy customers need and to make the organization success and sustain, CRC must act proactively in fulfilling the need of their customer. Hence, one of the best ways to make organization sustain in industry is by knowing the customer's perceptions. In dealing with the concept of customers' perception, perception becomes important because customers are the backbone of any successful concern. In this study, the researcher found that customers from the studied CRC have their own perception on the service received. Among five dimensions of independent variable which are reliability, assurance, tangibility, responsiveness and empathy, assurance dimension is the highest influencing customers' perception in one of the CRC in Shah Alam, Malaysia.

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