Public Service Delivery Dilemma:
Achieving Quality of Service in Fiji

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Abstract

Today customers (or citizens of any nation) want effective, efficient and equitable services. The global problem is one where public service delivery is in a state of dilemma and service quality appears to be deteriorating. The dilemma is that the performance of the public service is not businesslike, and this has impacted the quality of service delivery. With this, customers/citizens are demanding an answer. In Fiji the area of public service delivery and service quality in particular appears to have received fairly modest attention. The main objectives of this paper are to get deeper understanding of the public service dilemma and understand the relationships between quality of services and customer satisfaction.

Key Words: Public service delivery, service quality, customer satisfaction, dilemma, problems, Fiji.
Introduction

Any discussion of public service delivery (PSD) implies investigation of a total arrangement of established structures, processes and procedures that authorised individuals abide by to process and deliver goods or services to the people (Osborne & Gaebler 1992). These arrangements, as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) point out, are characterised by values of transparency, fairness, accountability and equal access. The main responsibility of public service agencies, and the reason for their existence, in whatever part of the world they are, is to provide the citizens with varied services of good quality. Intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability are three important characteristics that make public services unique in nature and this makes it hard for them to practice and stimulate service excellence. The provision of public services, to all citizens, is seen to be an overarching social good. This is a very significant issue since these high quality services play a decisive role in enhancing individual capabilities to participate fully in the growth of the economy. Any attempt to achieve quality without a complete consideration of the customers’ requirements and their expectations will result in serious deficiencies (Sewell 1997).

Quality of service in public service delivery is one of the hottest and most debatable issues. According to Halaris and others (2007) organisations are trying to self-assess and measure the quality of the services they deliver. Service quality, an important element that service firms would gladly profess to be striving towards for the benefit of their customers (Caruana et al. 2000), is of vital concern for institutions (Zineldin 2006). The quality of service can be broadly measured by the extent to which it meets customer expectations or by how closely it approaches being ‘perfect service’. Citizens in a country who avail themselves of a public service initiate the service interaction with the service provider. Citizens may develop a state of either physical or psychological discomfort or both as a result of the quality of service based on their service interaction. This affects customer perception with regard to their views on service quality. Therefore, this characteristic of the interaction between the service provider and customer needs to be kept in mind while assessing the citizens’ views on the quality of service received. Thus to build public trust, life chances and employees’ morale, creating a good relationship between the service provider and the service receiver becomes important. Also, good public service management has to be rational, fast, easy, cheap and transparent, adhering to all rules and regulations for providing customer satisfaction. For this, public service agencies need to create and maintain good win–win relationships with the citizen/customers. Public services of superior quality and cost-effective, efficient, equitable delivery of them not only strengthen social and economic development but also augment democracy by promoting fairness, civic responsibility and social cohesion.\(^1\) The World Bank has also highlighted quality as a global priority.

In developing countries, public services, though accessible and affordable, are often of low quality. The lack of accountability, weak supervision, high politicisation and fiscal constraints are considered serious impediments to the delivery of better quality services in most of these countries. In order to provide some background to this study, the paper begins with a brief review of literature on public service delivery and service quality. The next section discusses the methodology, while the subsequent section introduces the analysis and discussion. The last section concludes the ongoing debate by summarising the findings with research limitations and research contributions and recommendations for future research.

This research will investigate whether the quality of public services has any relevance for people in third world countries. Findings will fill some of the gaps in our understanding of the relationship
between the quality of public services and customer satisfaction in third world countries. The research will also investigate the impact of quality of public services on customer satisfaction. Findings will provide valuable information on key issues such as how satisfied people feel with the local services they receive.

**Literature review**

Not only worldwide but also in the Pacific, service delivery is a major problem. The problems of poor service delivery in the Pacific are mostly due to lack of accountability, transparency and commitment in making services work for poor and marginalised citizens. Citizens in today’s times have become more aware of their roles and their rights and have heightened expectations of public services. Although frequently the public service provider is the sole provider, this monopoly in providing services both denies citizens a choice and can cause bottlenecks in service delivery. Yet citizens, especially those who are taxpayers, still expect a positive customer experience in return for the money that they are paying to the public sector. Customers/citizens have a critical role in service delivery as they can contribute to the quality of services by soliciting response to their questions, taking responsibility for the satisfaction level they will accept and providing feedback by complaining if there are service failures.

In Fiji, in cases where services were available, low quality has often been a concern. Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, on his visit to the Public Service Commission at Berkeley Crescent in Suva, conveyed a strong message to civil servants and bureaucrats ‘to come out from their comfort zone and improve the delivery of service to the people’. News reports further highlighted that he was disheartened and felt thwarted, when on tour, by the negative reports received from the rural areas. He is quoted as commenting, ‘I must admit that the delivery of service is very bad’. Research by Reddy and colleagues (2004) found that institutions in Fiji are inappropriate and under-performing. Fiji needs to focus on building sound socio-economic and political institutions and processes to improve governance (in both private and public sectors), increase transparency and accountability, install legal, regulatory and supervisory frameworks, be sensitive to societal needs and develop ownership and legitimacy. The National Integrity Systems Country Study Report (2001) highlights corruption and poor governance as major contributing factors towards poor service delivery in Fiji. But, according to the permanent secretary to the Public Service Commission, Parmesh Chand, ‘Fiji’s long-criticised public service is headed for a turnaround in service delivery . . .’. He further states that work on reforms to the civil service is on the roadway with greater prominence given to establishing a leaner, more dynamic and efficient public service.

Service quality literature has identified numerous models but the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) and another model proposed by Sureshchandar et al. (2002) are more relevant in debating issues raised in this research. The SERVQUAL instrument is a 22-item scale that measures service quality along five factors, namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. But Sureshchandar et al. (2002) identified five critical factors (from customers’ point of view) of service quality that are overlooked by the SERVQUAL instrument, including core service, the human element of service delivery, systematisation of service delivery, tangibles of service and social responsibility. Furthermore, service quality relies heavily on the technical and social capabilities of service employees, and the performance of service workers can vary considerably from one employee to another within the same service organisation (Wirtz & Bateson 1999a, b).
Customer satisfaction is the leading criterion for determining the quality that is actually delivered to customers through the product or service (Vavra 1997). Also, customer satisfaction has become so important in its theoretical and practical sense that its antecedents and consequences are among the most heavily researched areas in marketing and consumer behaviour (Braunsberger & Gates 2002; Gelade & Young 2005; Wirtz & Chew, 2002). Many research studies conducted in the past by Kelley and Davis (1994); Parasuraman et al. (1994); Bettencourt (1997) and Zineldin (2000) have looked at this link between services quality and satisfaction.

There is no common definition of customer satisfaction, but most researchers agree that satisfaction (and dissatisfaction, respectively) is the result of a complex psychological comparison of expected and actual product performance (Cronin & Taylor 1994; Johnson & Fornell 1991; Yi 1990). This is based on the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Churchill & Suprenant 1982; Pansuraman et al. 1994). Disconfirmation is when experiences fall short of expectations (customer satisfaction is negative; negative disconfirmation), while confirmation implies that experiences match with or exceed expectations (positive disconfirmation; customer satisfaction is positive) (Brown et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2000; Hammer 2006; Santos & Boote 2003). Within a ‘zone of indifference’, where the gap between expectations and perceived performance is too small to arouse an emotional reaction, neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction arises (Churchill & Suprenant 1982; Woodruff et al. 1983). Apart from the disconfirmation model, consumer behaviour can also be studied based on an overall evaluation of service performance. This has been cited in research works (Brady & Cronin 2001; Cronin et al. 2000; Dabholkar et al. 2000 cited in Dean 2004). Hence, service quality is defined as customers’ overall judgement of service quality in terms of excellence and superiority. In practically all models explained by authors such as Anderson and Mittal (2000), Bolton et al. (2004), Heskett et al. (1994) and Rust et al. (1995), word of mouth (WOM) is recognised as mutually a corollary of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Although there is a strong dependency between service quality and customer satisfaction, the two constructs are different (Sureshchandar et al. 2001). Service quality is more abstract than customer satisfaction and is likely to be influenced by variables like advertising, other forms of communication and the experiences of others (Bitner & Habart 1994). Therefore, it becomes imperative for the public service agencies engaged in providing services to the customers to view the two constructs separately.

The main research questions in this research will be: (1) to determine what are the key problems constituting the dilemma in public services and what is the standard of public service quality (rating) in Fiji; (2) to investigate what the difference is between public service perception (experience) and public service expectation of public services in Fiji; and (3) to measure the level of public service quality and customer satisfaction.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Fiji through one methodological framework, namely quantitative research. Structured questionnaires were distributed to different groups of respondents based on stratified random sampling. In Fiji, Viti Levu was selected as the main area of study. The sample size of 200 citizens and public servants in Fiji was surveyed (2 non-response cases) (refer to table 1). Content or face validity and construct validity were both tested, face validity in the pilot testing phase; construct validity was ensured by linking the theoretical rationale to the concepts being measured.
Table 1 Socio-demographics of the sample (N = 198)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1: Age</th>
<th>Q6: Job Status (For citizens)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Businessmen 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-39</td>
<td>Unemployed 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 40</td>
<td>Housewife 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church Leader 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Education</td>
<td>Chiefly status 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Politician 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Private sector employees 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Top 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: Marital Status</td>
<td>First level 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Others 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Divorced/Widowed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Citizen</td>
<td>F$1000 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Fiji Citizen</td>
<td>F$1000-5000 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F$5001-10000 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F$100001-15000 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F$15001-20000 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F$&gt;20000 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis and discussion

Research Question 1: What are the key problems in public services and what is the standard of public service quality (rating) in Fiji?

The sample of citizens, on the basis of their perception of their experience of accessing public services, identified key problems of public service delivery that may be classified in three areas: effectiveness, efficiency and equity of services. In the effectiveness category, eight constructs, 1–3
and 5–9, were rated on a negative scale in Fiji, showing that this category is a problem area in public services. The constructs were: accurate response, timely information, feedback response, reliability in services, assurance (knowledge, courtesy, trust and confidence), reducing discretion and chances of bribery, reducing transaction costs, and increasing transparency and openness. Construct 4, citizen participation, on the other hand, received an average rating from the respondents.

For the efficiency category, overall, in Fiji, the rating for construct 1: cost factor was low in the area of acquiring services; as also for construct 2: waiting time in acquiring services; and respondents rated construct 3: procedures are streamlined by reducing the layers of bureaucracy on the negative scale, implying that it was seen as a problem.

In terms of the category of equity, the majority of the respondents gave negative ratings for construct 1: affordable services, construct 2: accessible services and construct 3: nepotism, kickback and greasing the palm, implying this dimension as a major problem area in Fiji. The 198 respondents in Fiji were questioned on how they rate the overall public service delivery in Fiji. Analysis indicates that 16.2 per cent consider that public service delivery is very poor, 44.9 per cent have rated it as poor and 31.3 per cent find it acceptable, whereas a small 6.1 per cent rate public service delivery as good and a mere 1 per cent rate it as very good. These findings are similar to the findings of the Naz (2006) study, also in Fiji, and other sources already indicated in the introductory section of this paper.

Research Question 2: What is the difference between Public service perception (experience) and Public service expectation of public services in Fiji?

To understand this, the paired sample t-test was carried out with the help of SPSS 15. The importance of the paired sample t-test is that it intends to identify differences between the mean values, in this case perception (actual experience) in public service delivery and expectation (should be; ought to be) service delivery. Analysis reveals that in Fiji, the difference between Public service experience and Public service expectation are negative (–1.249); implying that the Public service experience is less than what citizens expect; or in other words Public service experience does not match Public service expectations. The values are significant as it is well below p value 0.05. Customer satisfaction is based on customer expectations and perception of service quality (Christou & Sigala 2002; Ekinci 2004; Sigala 2004a, 2004b). According to Woodside et al. (1989) and Van der Wiele et al. (2002), customer dissatisfaction then results from service quality and influences behavioural intentions and organisational performance. From these findings it can be inferred that service delivery is in a quandary, resulting in not being able to meet customers’ requirements (expectations).

Problems in public service agencies stem from ineffective, inefficient and inequitable services, and mostly this has been the result of the cumulation of cumbersome procedures that escalate problems in service delivery for the citizens. According to Peppers and Rogers’ (2008) research, ‘customers have memories. They will remember you, whether you remember them or not . . . customer trust can be destroyed at once by a major service problem, or it can be undermined one day at a time, with a thousand small demonstrations of incompetence’. This quote clearly highlights the critical role played by public service agencies in delivering services, because customers are the judge. To improve service quality and the standard of delivery, customer relationship management should be an integral
part of this, where information is provided to the public agencies to deliver the best services, and customers’ needs are identified and relationships built to cater effectively for them. Public agencies need to look constantly for ways to provide customers more than they anticipate (which is all part of quality services and service standards). There is a need for public agencies to relook at their service management priorities and ensure that citizens' needs are taken into account. Particularly important are the service offerings and service strategies that they use as it impacts customer satisfaction and the level of quality as perceived by the customers/citizens. Just having standards and measures is not enough, but actually publishing the results is essential to track if any changes and improvements have been made and to hold the key service delivery providers accountable.

Research Question 3: To measure the level of public service quality and customer satisfaction.

Research shows that the higher the service quality the more satisfied the customers; therefore this implies that customer satisfaction is based on customer expectations and perception of service quality (Christou & Sigala 2002; Sigala 2004a, 2004b).

Fiji has a mean value of 3.69 with standard deviation of 0.85 on public service quality. The mean values suggest that in Fiji, customers rated public service quality as poor because the mean values are near to 4 rating scale (poor). For customer satisfaction, Fiji has a mean value of 2.42 with standard deviation of 0.83, suggesting that customers were mostly dissatisfied. Thus, this implies that the lower the service quality, the lower the ranking on customer satisfaction (meaning customers are dissatisfied). Further, correlation was conducted using Bivariate Correlations procedure between public service rating and customer satisfaction and it was found that Public Service Rating (Quality) is significantly correlated with customer satisfaction and significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). It indicates a strong or large linear association but the relationship is negative, implying that if Public Service rating (Quality) is poor (negative), then customer satisfaction will also decline. The coefficient of determination for Public Service Rating (Quality) was $r = 0.276 \times 0.276 = 0.076176$. This indicates 7.6 per cent shared variance. Public Service rating or quality helps to explain nearly 7.6 percent of the variance in customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis testing

H1: The key drivers of service quality are: efficiency, effectiveness and equity

This hypothesis was developed to assess whether service quality is the result of effectiveness, efficiency and equity in services. To test this hypothesis, one-sample t test was carried out. It was tested by taking the population mean value of 0 and assuming it as an indifferent response. Table 2 presents the results.
### Table 2 Drivers of service quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>VBP (1) Count</th>
<th>P (2) Count</th>
<th>OK (3) Count</th>
<th>SP (4) Count</th>
<th>NVBP (5) Count</th>
<th>Mean Diff. Count</th>
<th>Sig. At 5 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Effectiveness in Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accurate Response</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.90909</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timely Information</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.38889</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feedback Response</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.37374</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Citizen Participation</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.63131</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reliability in services</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.32487</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assurance (knowledge, courtesy, trust and confidence)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.34184</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reducing discretion and chances of bribery</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.06566</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reducing transaction cost</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.53030</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Increase transparency and openness Efficiency in Services</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.40102</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Efficiency in Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cost factor is low in</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.49495</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Waiting time is low in acquiring services</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.27179</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Streamlined procedures (by reducing the layers of bureaucracy)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.27835</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Equity in Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Affordable Services</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.52525</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accessible Services</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63673</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nepotism, Kickback and greasing the palm</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.96447</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Services need to be effective in delivering a level of performance that meets customer needs or expectations (Sasser et al. 1978). While sometimes intertwined with productivity, effectiveness or customer service typically refers to ‘doing the right things’ and measures constructs like customer satisfaction on dimensions, such as service quality, speed, timing, and human interaction. A service is effective whenever its outcomes or accomplishments are of value to its customers. Berman (1998) makes the distinction among three goals that are important to public organisations: efficiency, effectiveness and equity. Equity refers to the need to provide services to all citizens or equal access to those who require the specific services provided. In general, public organisations focus more on equity and effectiveness and less on efficiency; and profit organisations focus more on efficiency, less on effectiveness, and not at all on equity (ibid.). While the details are certainly arguable, it is perhaps more important to recognise that all services may vary, with some providing a greater challenge to productivity and performance enhancement efforts, therefore, setting the impetus for research in the public sector context. Service quality has been suggested as a means of developing a competitive advantage (Clow & Vorhies, 1993; Gowan et al., 2001; Hensher et al., 2003; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Previously service quality was confined to private services; however, in the past few years it has become apparent in the public sector (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2003).

In analysing the key drivers of service quality in Fiji, the respondents believe that the key drivers (effectiveness, efficiency and equity) are significant and explain service quality. All values are significant as they are below 0.05. Page and Spreng (2002) had defined service quality as ‘the overall evaluation of service performance’. This model was also discussed by other researchers (Brady & Cronin 2001; Cronin et al. 2000; Dabholkar et al. 2000 cited in Dean 2004; Parasuraman et al. 1988). Thus, H1 is accepted for Fiji and it can be inferred that service quality is the result of, or is positively affected by, effectiveness, efficiency and equity in services.

As a further test of the key drivers, the chi–square test of independence was carried out. The importance of chi–square is that it intends to identify whether the perceived findings are real or a result of sampling error. With reference to H1, it is expected that PS effectiveness, PS efficiency and PS equity would have an impact on service quality. The output for the test is shown in table 3.

Table 3 Variables Influencing Service Quality for Fiji

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS Effectiveness</td>
<td>78.21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS Efficiency</td>
<td>114.72</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS Equity</td>
<td>92.37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Accepted at < 0.05

A chi–square test of independence between PS Effectiveness, PS Efficiency and PS Equity indicates that the variables are dependent on each other in the case of Fiji as chi–square = 78.21 for PS Effectiveness with a p value of 0.000 < 0.05; chi-square = 114.72 for PS Efficiency with a p value of 0.000 < 0.05; chi square = 92.37 for PS Equity with a p value of 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, this result supports H1 in the case of Fiji.
H2: There is a huge difference in satisfaction of citizens for public services in Fiji

To test this hypothesis, respondents evaluated customer satisfaction on a scale of ‘1 to 5’ where 1 represents ‘Very Dissatisfied’ and 5 represents ‘Very Satisfied’. The researchers have calculated an average for each problem. A low average score implies either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied and a high average score implies very satisfied or satisfied. The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion from the mean. The higher the standard deviation, the lower the agreement of respondents on the customer satisfaction (CS). Also the lower the standard deviation, the higher the agreement about CS. This measure reveals the degree of agreement on their evaluation. The Fiji sample produced a mean value of 2.42 with a standard deviation of 0.83. The mean values suggest that in Fiji, customers were mostly dissatisfied. This conforms with the lower standard deviation, which suggests that fewer customers were satisfied. Thus, H2 is accepted in Fiji. This is a new finding in this study and thus makes a contribution to the body of literature as there is no study that has measured and studied customer satisfaction in public service delivery (PSD) in the Pacific context.

Conclusion

An overall conclusion that readily surfaces from the results is that the quality of services provided to citizens in Fiji is poor and not satisfactory. The results obtained also confirm some of those obtained in the academic literature in finding that the quality of services that the consumer/citizen perceives influences his or her satisfaction in a positive and significant way. This relationship is also strong, such that if public service agencies wish to improve their citizens’ satisfaction, they should try to improve the quality of the service offered. While the analysis of the identified variables using the scale items has contributed to identifying the strong attributes, the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between the satisfaction variables, with a strong significant correlation existing between the ‘service quality’ and ‘customer satisfaction’ factors, indicating that when customers are satisfied with the services, the quality of public service delivery is generally considered to be satisfactory. The major bottlenecks to improved, efficient and satisfactory public service delivery in Fiji are financial and institutional, as they pertain to existing arrangements for providing public services. Major triggers that could make the service delivery (to the level of citizens’ expectations) in Fiji pertain to changes in institutional arrangements for service delivery (privatisation) and public participation, and finances (less of a trigger).

Furthermore, conclusions related to service quality and customer satisfaction here, are based on empirical findings from perceptions and experiences of urban and rural customers. This paper is one of the important studies taken in context of South Pacific Island countries and the status of public services. The research that has been conducted in the past was mostly confined to bigger Pacific countries, with very little in the area of customer satisfaction and public service delivery.

Implications of the research findings

The findings of this research will have relevance for policy making and supportive measures at government levels for improving the services that need to be provided to the public in general. More importantly, managers of respective agencies involved in providing various services to the citizens can recognise that the satisfaction focus and timing can be customised for their needs. Rather than looking at all aspects of the choice/consumption experience, managers can concentrate on those...
that are of direct interest or are directly controllable. As a result, managers are able to obtain ‘true’ consumer responses that are relevant to managerial decision making. **It is vital for public agencies to state that** ‘customer service quality and satisfaction’ are key components in PSD to their staff. Key performance benchmarks need to be set up and services monitored. Strong accountability mechanisms need to be intact and reward based structures need to be built in. One method can be in utilising the potential of ICTs towards providing effective, efficient and equitable services.

### Notes


### References


