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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### SERVICE QUALITY INDICATOR ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE SHOE SHINE ENTERPRISES IN ELDORET TOWN, KENYA

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#### ABSTRACT

In the present shoe shine enterprises scenario, service quality is a vital competitive advantage to maintain customer support and build great base for the enterprise. However, customer loyalty is little known and these categories of enterprise continue to be marginalized. This study examined the influence of service quality on customer loyalty in the shoe shine enterprises in Eldoret town Kenya. The specific objective of this study was to assess the effect of tangible of a service on customer loyalty. The study was based on the SERVQUAL model. The research design was a survey. A selection of 23 shoe shine enterprises guided the study to arrive at a sample size of 230 respondents selected randomly. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. The main findings of this study indicated that, tangible of a service had a significant relationship with customer loyalty. Equally, customers considered tangible of a service as a critical indicator of their perception of service quality. This study concludes that service quality had a higher impact on loyalty in the shoe shine enterprises in Eldoret town Kenya. Arising from the conclusion of this study, it is recommended that county governments provide infrastructure for shoe shine enterprises to design modern shoe shine enterprises resulting to increased profitability in the long run as a result of repeat purchase.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Shoe shine enterprises, and all enterprises whose service depend on building long term relationships need to concentrate on maintaining customer loyalty. In this respect, loyalty is greatly influenced by service quality [24]. As such, shoe shine enterprises need to invest in managing their relationships with customers and maintain quality to ensure that customers whose loyalty is in the short term will continue to be loyal in the long run. Shoe shine enterprises in Kenya are found at the lowest end of the enterprise range, where millions of individuals sell goods and or services on the streets [35]. Most of the shoe shine enterprises are located along major streets of Eldoret town including: Police Line, Bargetuny Plaza Area, Municipal Council of Eldoret, Nandi Park, Main Bus Park Stage, and Referral Road. Poor access to infrastructure and especially land has several consequences to the income and productivity of the informal units. Access to resources, markets, land, basic infrastructure, skills, traits, knowledge, and, culture could affect entrepreneurial opportunities in a country [4]. Some of the facilities required by shoe shine enterprises include appropriate physical infrastructure, access to market, sources of assistance and a favourable legal and regulatory environment [8]. Service quality is, by character a complex concept, which means by managing service quality, enterprises should know what exactly service quality means to customers [36]. This could imply, rationally managing a service interaction also calls for comprehending the much complicated behaviours of employees that will have a telling effect on the customer perception of service quality. Shoe shine enterprise is a very typical industry, customer's importance to enterprises, and how to attract, develop and maintain customers has become more and more important in the sharp competition. The competition in shoe shine

enterprises is becoming more and more fiercely [15]. Thus, customer loyalty is playing a significant role in the shoe shine enterprise market competition. Customer loyalty is one of the most dominated factors which drive the profits incoming of the operators in the enterprise industry [33].

#### Hypothesis

Research has shown that tangible of a service is one of the most significant variables in explaining service quality Sureshchandar, *et al.* [40]. Variables considered in this study to indicate tangible of a service were: ambient conditions, appealing physical facilities, neatness of shoe shine enterprises and entertainment materials. While loyalty indicators included: repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, switching intentions and referrals by the customers of shoe shine enterprises. Therefore, this research tests the influence of service quality on customer loyalty in the shoe shine enterprises in Eldoret town Kenya. The specific objective of this study was to assess the effect of tangible of a service on customer loyalty.

#### Therefore, the hypothesis for this study was formulated as follow:

H<sub>01</sub> There is no statistically significant relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### The concept of service quality

The quality concept is multidimensional in a sense that consumer needs are multiple and diverse, also because it includes aspects such as tastes, ability for use, design, safety, reliability and respect to environment [9]. He further explains that although there had been a lot and varied concepts related to what is quality and what is not,

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different researchers agree on the primary goal of quality is found on the client's satisfaction. The term satisfaction is understood as the response of client's fullness satiety; a judgment over the service's features, or a service in itself, which gives a pleasant level of reward related to use. Service quality is the difference between customer expectations regarding a service to be received and perceptions of the service being received or the extent to which a service meets customer expectations and needs (Grönroos, 2001). He further defines service quality as the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the services, they added that customers used tangibles cues such as hardness, style, label, colour and package to judge the quality of products. In this study service quality refers to the extent to which the service being offered meets customers expectation. Quality means different things to different customers [17]. He explains that, as long as a service exceeds the expectation of a customer, it is said to be of relatively good quality. This could imply that service quality is said to meet customers' expectations and satisfaction when there is repeat purchase

### Tangible of a service

Tangible relates to the effect of physical facility, equipment, personnel and communication materials on customers [18]. They further explain that tangible of a service relate to the style and appearance of the physical surroundings and other elements encountered by customers at service delivery sites. Equally [3], defined tangible of a service as the effect of the physical facility, equipment, personnel and communication materials on customers. Tangible of a service is the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service [42]. They point out that tangible of a service evidence includes, any tangible representations of the organisation, including the physical facility or building where the service is offered. Tangible of a service provide the opportunity for the enterprise to send the message they want regarding the enterprise's purpose and nature of the service [3]. He further suggests that the effect of tangible of a service does influence consumers in a number of ways in psychological, emotional and physiological ways. Many other authors have also discussed in detail the impact of these tangible on the service perceptions by customers [16] and their effect on employees.

The importance of how customers think about a service has been recognised for some time [39]. He comments that service images and service realities appear to be shaped to a large extent by the things that the customer can comprehend with their five senses, tangible things and when a customer attempts to judge a service, particularly before buying it, that service is known by the tangible clues and the tangible evidence which surrounds it. [18], suggest that the ambient conditions such as temperature, music, noise and scent are the main dimensions of service environment. They further explain that the ambient condition refer to those characteristics of the environment that pertain to ones five senses. The resulting atmospheric conditions such as temperature create a mood that is perceived and interpreted by customers in a service encounter Patrick *et al.* [31]. In addition, [18] clarifies that in service setting, music can have a powerful effect on the perceptions and behaviours even if played at barely audible volumes. He further observes that music can be used to deter the wrong type of customer. Equally [25] enlightens that various characteristics of music such as volume, and harmony are perceived holistically. Furthermore, [21] found that fast tempo music and high volume music increases arousal levels. [18], observe that scent is one that passes through an environment and may or may not be consciously perceived by customers, and is not related to any particular product or service. [10] explain that scent can be used to manage people's behaviours. They found customers were willing to buy Nike sneakers and pay more for them when they tried the shoes in a floral-scented room. He adds that the same effect was found when the scent was so faint that people could not detect it.

Kheng *et al.*, [14], found that tangible had no impact on customer loyalty in a study of banks in Penang, Malaysia. They observed that there is a changing trend and respondents did not treat tangibles as an important measurement anymore due to availability of self-service terminals and that service industry customers do not view the tangible as an important factor for them.

### Customer loyalty

Since shoe shine enterprises are very concerned about customer loyalty, they need to review and reexamine their strategies not only to sustain customer loyalty but also to remain competitive. Customer loyalty has been described to as a relationship between relative attitude towards an entity and repeat patronage behaviour [7]; a situation when repeat purchase behaviour is accompanied by a psychological bond [13]; and repeat purchase intentions and behaviours [32]; as a favourable attitude towards a brand in addition to purchasing it repeatedly [6]. Baumann *et al.* [2] noted that [6] introduced the concept that customer loyalty had both behavioral and attitudinal dimensions. The behavior approach includes criteria such as repeat purchase, share-of-wallet, and word of mouth referrals, whereas the attitudinal approach consists of criteria like commitment, trust or emotional attachment. [1] examined the link between attitude and behavior and found that the stronger the attitudinal commitment, the more likely consumers were to remain loyal, thus the use of an attitudinal measure would also indicate the behavioral dimension of customer loyalty. Woodside *et al.* [41] suggests that customers are loyal as long as they continue to buy and use a good or service. This means that loyal customers repeatedly purchase a good or service over time, and hold favourable attitudes towards a good or service, or towards the company supplying the good or service. [34], equally states that the strongest evidence of customer loyalty is the percentage of customers who are enthusiastic enough to refer a friend or colleague to a particular good and/or service.

### Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study presented in Figure 1 was based on the SERVQUAL model by [30]. The theoretical discussion of literature focused on the SERVQUAL by [30] model which has contributed to the explanation of service quality indicators determinants and its role in enterprise performance. Empirical evidence included service quality indicator: Tangible of a service and customer loyalty. The SERVQUAL model was adapted in this study because it has been popular with academics and researchers to assess the customer perception of service quality. It is the assumption of this study that, customer loyalty is achieved through a process that combines service quality indicator tangible of a service. Tangible of a service included; ambient conditions, appealing physical facilities, neatness of shoe shine enterprises and entertainment materials.

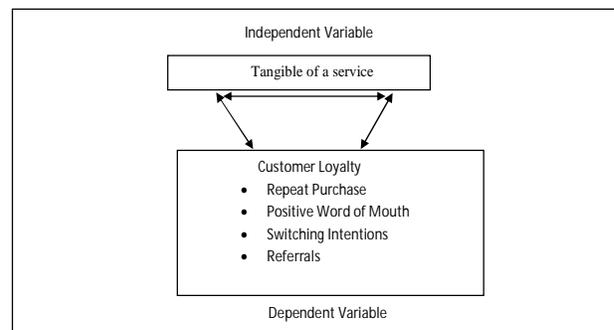


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Service Quality Indicator on Customer Loyalty

Tangible of a service was considered as the independent variable in this study, while customer loyalty was considered as the dependent variable. Shoe shine enterprises integrates service quality indicator in

such a way they influence customer loyalty as reflected in the changes in the dependent variable measures; repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, switching intentions and referrals by the customers of shoe shine enterprises.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter examined methods and procedures employed in answering the research objective of the study and data analysis. The sample for the study constituted a sampling frame drawn from Eldoret Municipal Council record year 2011. This study employed a survey strategy. The idea of a survey is that the researcher obtains the same kind of data from a large group of people or events in a standardised and systematic way and that a researcher then looks for patterns in the data that can be generalised to a large population than the group targeted [27]; [19]. Survey research design falls under descriptive studies. It is associated with the deductive approach, which is a common strategy in business and management research Saunders *et al.* [37]. Sample survey facilitates collection and analysis of a given set of characteristics in a population and allows collection of a large amount of data from a population in a highly economical way. This study involved asking questions, which formed the basis for deriving information [20]; [26]; [5]. The survey strategy allows a researcher to collect qualitative data which can be analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics [37]; [23]. In addition, data collected using a survey strategy can be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables. Survey design is perceived to be authoritative by people in general and it is easily understood, and can therefore result in valuable findings if correct procedures are followed [22]. The study targeted customers of 304 shoe shine enterprises. 23 shoe shine enterprises selected systematically guided the study to arrive at a sample size of 230 respondents (their customers) selected randomly.

The researcher with the aid of a research assistant administered 230 questionnaires to respondents randomly between 26<sup>th</sup> November and 18<sup>th</sup> December. 225 questionnaires were analysed, 5 were dropped due to respondents inability to respond to questions. The size of the sample stands at 225 with a response rate of (98%). The high response rate was due to the personal contact approach used by the researcher as suggested by Sureshchandar *et al.*, [40]. The individual elements for this study were selected from the sampling frame using probability technique because representative samples could help in achieving the goals of the study. A pilot test was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. A sample size of 30 respondents was used for statistical analysis as a rule of thumb suggested by Saunders *et al.*, [37]. Pilot testing assisted in refining and revising data collection instruments [26]. Data collected through pilot study was analysed and provided insights that needed to be changed. The results also provided estimation period of completing the questionnaires. Data collected had been measured at two levels nominal and ordinal scales as appropriate. The measurement levels determined analysis methods for this study [28]; [22]; [37]; [12]; [38]. Data analysis aimed at searching and identifying patterns of relationships that existed among variables in this study. Data analysis in this study was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics particularly frequencies, Spearman's rho correlation and ordinal regression.

Ethical consideration and research authorization in this study was obtained from the National Council for Science and Technology, Ref. No. NCST/RR1/SS-011/1558/4; subject to authority from Eldoret Municipal Council and the District Commissioner Uasin Gishu County. Prior to administering the questionnaires, a letter stating the purpose of the study and how the researcher intended to maintain privacy, confidentiality and anonymity was attached. The researcher was required to ensure high degree of tolerance, honesty and patience with customers of shoe shine enterprises while getting information from them [5]. The limitation in this study was resources (time and finance) however, did not affect the results, given that results from the

County could be generalized to other Counties where shoe shine enterprises are emerging. The possible effect of the limitations of semi-literate respondent was managed through a trained research assistant.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented on the basis of the study objective, the effect of tangible of a service on customer loyalty.

### Frequencies of tangible of a service in relation to service quality

The frequencies of tangible of a service in relation to service quality as perceived by the customers are presented in Table 1. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents 183 (81%) perceived negatively that the temperature conditions where they received the service pleased them to indicate service quality, 42 (19%) agreed. This could imply firstly, that owing to the nature of the shoe shine enterprises in the open affected the customers especially during rainy and hot seasons. Secondly, the negative perception by customers on the odour of the shoe shiner could imply the shoe shine enterprises were not hygienically clean, produced bad smell as a result of sweating because of their enterprises are open and were exposed to direct sun, dust, rain along their daily routine activities. Moreover, majority 168 (75%) of the respondents were negative on the appealing physical facilities at the shoe shine enterprise to indicate service quality, while 57 (25%) agreed. This could imply that customers did not appreciate the physical facilities including sits, brushes, buckets used in delivering the service to them. The results indicate professional and neatness of the shoe shine enterprises had 144 (64%) negative response to indicate service quality while, 81 (26%) of the respondents were positive. This could imply, firstly, that shoe shine enterprises were dirty and did not observe personal cleanliness. Secondly, this could also imply that customers perceive shoe shine enterprise appear not to be professionals in appearance. Lastly, 174 (78%) respondents were negative that the shoe shine enterprises provided them with entertainment materials like music and newspapers, the neutral response constitute of 3 (1%) while 48 (21%) were positive. This could imply the customers were bored and did not appreciate they were not given entertainment materials such newspapers, music as they could have expected to indicate service quality.

### Relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty

This study shows the relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty. The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between tangible of a service and dependent variable is presented in Table 2. The results show that tangible of a service indicators; temperature conditions, had a significant negative relationship with customer loyalty ( $r_s = -0.465$   $p < 0.05$ ). The study results compare with those of [40]; [31] that observed that the atmospheric conditions such as temperature created a move that is perceived and interpreted by customers. The results could imply that as temperature conditions increase then customer loyalty decreases. Equally the appealing physical facilities aspect had a positive significant relationship with customer loyalty ( $r_s = 0.539$   $p < 0.05$ ). The study confirms those of [29]; [40]. This could imply that when the physical facilities are appealing the loyalty increase. In addition the visually appealing materials associated with the service had a positive significant relationship with customer loyalty ( $r_s = 0.401$   $p < 0.05$ ). The study findings could imply that when customers perceive positively visual materials associated with shoe shine enterprises they become more loyal. Equally, Neatness and professionalism of the shoe shiner had a significant positive relationship with customer loyalty ( $r_s = 0.565$   $p < 0.05$ ). This could imply that when shoe shine enterprises presented them professionally and being neat physically, customers tend to be loyal. Further entertainment materials like music and newspapers had a positive significant relationship with customer loyalty ( $r_s = 0.433$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings support those of [18]; [25] that suggest music

Table 1. Frequencies of Tangible of a Service Indicators in Relation to Service Quality

Indicators of Tangible of a Service	Rank	F	%
The ambient conditions such as temperature pleases me	Agree	42	19
	Disagree	183	81
	Total	225	100
The physical facilities at the shoe shine enterprises are visually appealing	Agree	57	25
	Disagree	168	75
	Total	225	100
The shoe shine enterprise is neat and has professional appearance	Agree	81	26
	Disagree	144	64
	Total	225	100
The shoe shine enterprise provides entertainment materials like newspaper, music	Agree	48	21
	Neutral	3	1
	Disagree	174	78
	Total	225	100

Table 2. Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient of Tangible of a Service and Customer Loyalty

Tangible of a Service Indicators	Customer loyalty	
Temperature conditions	Correlation	-0.465**
	P-value	0.000
Appealing physical facilities	Correlation	0.539**
	P-value	0.000
Appealing materials	Correlation	0.401**
	P-value	0.000
Neatness of the shoe shiner	Correlation	0.565**
	P-value	0.000
Entertainment	Correlation	0.433**
	P-value	0.000

\*\* Denotes Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Denotes Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Ordinal Regression of Customer Loyalty Variable with Tangible of Service

Variables	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	95% Confidence Interval		Sig
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Threshold						
(Customer loyalty=SA)	-7.510	1.563	23.073	-9.279	-5.741	0.000
(Customer loyalty=A)	-0.832	0.663	1.574	-1.582	-0.082	0.030
(Customer loyalty=N)	3.170	0.976	10.546	2.065	4.274	0.000
Location						
(Attractive equipments=N)	-3.854	1.774	4.718	-5.862	-1.862	0.030
(Appealing physical facilities=SA)	-6.440	3.196	4.059	-10.056	-2.823	0.044
(Appealing physical facilities=A)	-4.281	2.059	4.322	-8.245	-1.245	0.038
(Appealing materials=N)	-5.407	2.117	6.525	-9.556	-1.676	0.011
Model	-2 Log Likelihood			Chi-square		
Intercept only	442.520					
Final	238.115			204.405		0.000
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.676						
Link function: Logit						
Key: SA- Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N- Neutral						

can have a powerful effect on the perceptions and behaviours even if played at barely audible volumes. Music can be used to deter the wrong type of customer. Thus shoe shine enterprises should entertain their customers by offering them newspapers, music to realise repeat purchase.

#### Ordinal regression analysis of customer loyalty with tangible of a service

This study shows that there is an association between tangible of a service and customer loyalty. The ordinal regression analysis between customer loyalty with tangible of a service is presented in Table 3.

The results indicate, firstly, that the customers of shoe shine enterprises who were neutral in their response whether the shoe shine enterprises used attractive equipments when offering services, had a negative effect ( $\beta=-3.854$   $p<0.05$ ) on customer loyalty. This could mean that the shoe shine enterprises equipments used in delivering the service did not please the customers thus had a negative effect on loyalty. The shoe shine enterprises should use appealing equipments for example use colourful buckets and slippers when delivering their services to avoid the negative attitude that the customer have on their equipments. Secondly, the results indicate that the respondents who agreed that the shoe shine enterprises physical facilities were

appealing had a negative effect ( $\beta=-6.440$   $p<0.05$ ) on customer loyalty. This could mean that the customers were not satisfied with the physical facilities associated with the service despite the fact that they were loyal. Thus the shoe shine enterprise should work on the physical facilities associated with the service to prevent the negative attitude by the customers towards their enterprises. Thirdly, the customers who were neutral on the appealing materials used by the shoe shine enterprises had a negative effect ( $\beta=-5.407$   $p<0.05$ ) on customer loyalty. This suggests that shoe shine enterprises should use appealing materials for example the cloths they use to wipe shoes before applying polish should be colourful to attract new customer and retain the existing one.

#### Hypothesis testing: statistical relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no statistical significant relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty

In order to analyze this hypothesis, Table 3, indicates that, -2log likelihood of the model with intercept only is 442.520 while the -2log likelihood of the model with intercept with independent variables final is 238.115. That is the difference (Chi-square statistics) is  $442.520 - 238.115 = 204.405$  which is significant at  $p<0.05$  shows there is an association between tangible of a service and customer loyalty.

$$\begin{aligned}\phi &= \frac{204.405}{225} \\ &= 0.908 \\ &= \sqrt{0.908} \\ &= 0.952\end{aligned}$$

Table 4. Cut off Points to Measure the Strength of the Relationship

Effect Size	Strength of Relationship
< 0.1	Weak
< 0.3	Modest
< 0.5	Moderate
< 0.8	Strong
> 0.8	Very Strong

Source: Muijs Daniel (2008).

The phi (0.95), refer to Table 4, shows that the relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty is very strong. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.676 indicates that (68%) of the variance is statistically significant in explaining customer loyalty using the predictor. In addition the square root of the R<sup>2</sup> ( $\sqrt{0.676}$ ) = 0.82 refer to Table 3.7, indicates that the study model is strong fit. The chi-square value which is significant at ( $p<0.05$ ) level show that tangible of a service plays a significant role in influencing customers towards shoe shine enterprises. The results show that the upper and lower bounds for both dependent and independent variables does not contain a zero value. Consequently, the results indicate confidence (95%) that there is a significant change between tangible of a service and customer loyalty. Thus, the null hypothesis that stated there is no statistical significant relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted and concluded that there is a relationship between tangible of a service and customer loyalty.

#### Conclusion

The study shows that customers consider tangible of a service as the most critical indicator of their perception of service quality. The findings indicate that shoe shine enterprises still need to improve on the other aspects of tangible of a service to better satisfy their customers and enhance repeat purchase, positive word of mouth, switching intentions and referrals hence realising loyalty.

#### Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the government provide infrastructure (land) for shoe shine enterprises in Eldoret town and in Kenya as a whole, which continue to act as a constraint to the growth of the sector.

2. The shoe shine enterprises should construct and design modern shoe shine enterprises to improve the tangible of a service facet making their customers to be satisfied.

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