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Customer satisfaction in records management at Botswana Examinations Council

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Abstract

This paper is extracted from a master's dissertation titled, "An evaluation of customer satisfaction at Botswana Examinations Council Records Management Unit." The purpose of this study was to investigate customer satisfaction at Botswana Examinations Council Records Management Unit (BEC RMU) using the SERVQUAL conceptual model. The study convergent mixed methods research approach with survey, interview, participant observation and document review as data collection tools. The findings of this study revealed that: the BEC RMU has adequate facilities, equipment and human resources that enable it to serve customers; there is no disaster management plan in the RMU; the RMU rarely conducts user needs assessment surveys and its officers use face-to-face communication, telephone, and emails to communicate with customers. The study recommends training for RMU officers in good customer service, management support, introduction of ERMS, workshops to sensitise RMU officers on customer service standards or any other related document, development of a disaster management plan, customer service programme and user needs assessment. The study further recommends orientation and induction of action officers.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, service quality, records management, Botswana Examinations Council, SERVQUAL model

Introduction

Records are very significant for an organisation and its customers. Relationships between organisations and their customers are usually supported by information or evidence that is generated as the parties interact with each other. In other words, records are the link between an organisation and its customers. However, effective information exchange between an organisation and its customers calls for effective and best practices in records management. Meeting and exceeding customers' expectations lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customer satisfaction is a key element of any organisational strategy, as customers are a central part of all services. Their loyalty is earned by means of excellent customer service. Bad customer service ruins the reputation of an organisation and affects its service delivery, leading to poor performance of the whole organisation. This study was undertaken at the Botswana Examinations Council Records Management Unit (BEC RMU) and focused on

both internal and external customers of the BEC RMU. The BEC RMU attends to both the internal and external customers, and it is vital for its personnel to know and practice good customer service. According to Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) (2009), a revolutionary development in Botswana's records management emanated from the 1985 Organization and Methods Review of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs. The Permanent Secretary to the President's Circular No. 4 of 1992 mandated BNARS to provide records management services to government. Its mandate involves managing all public records throughout their life cycle, from creation to disposition. This is achievable through archives and records management administration functions (BNARS, 2020). The Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) is not an exception in this regard, as it is a public-funded institution. BEC is headed by the chief executive officer. The directorates are headed by a director and divisions by a manager. Each directorate has managers who report to the director. The Chief Executive Officer, directors and the Manager of the Compliance and Quality Assurance Division form the Executive Management Team (BEC, 2020).

BEC RMU and its organisational structure

The Records Management Unit (RMU) resorts under the Directorate of Human Resources and is headed by a records management supervisor who reports directly to the manager, Human Resources. The RMU is the control centre of all records coming into and leaving the organisation. The services provided by the RMU include ensuring that mail is processed daily in accordance with schedules, monitoring the movement of files to ensure security and easy access, maintaining registered mail records and incoming/outgoing mail registers, reviewing and checking telephone records and following up queries and payment of private calls, liaising with telecommunication authorities to ensure the provision of efficient telecommunication services.

Statement of the problem

Creating a customer service culture helps to build the quality of customer service and this leads to the organisation's success. According to BNARS (2020), properly managed records contribute to efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Wang and Shieh (2006) point out that customers of any service organisation include both external and internal customers. Manewe-Sisa, Neo Mooko and Mnjama (2016) state that there is a relationship between customer satisfaction and records management. Viegas, Vasconcelos, Borbinha and Chora (2019), Ndubisi and Nwankwo (2019) and Tagbotor, Adzido, and Agbanu (2015) agree that proper records management improves the quality-of-service delivery of an organisation. This means that the organisation will be able to serve the customers effectively with information that will be valid and reliable. In addition, appropriate records management promotes trust in the customers about the organisation.

A study by Manewe-Sisa et al. (2016) revealed that the RMU at the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs (MLHA) did not have customer service standards but used generic customer service standards meant for the whole Ministry. Their findings indicated that the RMU does not benefit from feedback from customers. Manewe-Sisa et al. (2016: 164) recommended that further research should be conducted on "the impact of internal customer service on the service delivery given to the general public". This study therefore sought to investigate the extent to which the RMU at the BEC satisfied its customers and determine if the findings by Manewe-Sisa et al. (2016) were equally applicable to BEC, which is a quasi-governmental

agency in Botswana. In addition, most studies, like those done by Maphorisa and Jain (2013) and Sebudubudu (2013) used SERVQUAL gaps, but this study used the dimensions instead of the gaps.

Objectives of the study

- To find out if BEC RMU had enough facilities, equipment and human resources that enable it to serve its customers.
- To establish whether there were any standards and policies that guide service delivery at BEC RMU to maintain quality and reliable services.
- To assess whether RMU recognises and meets its customer needs.
- To recommend measures to improve customer satisfaction at BEC.

Theoretical framework

This study used SERVQUAL model, which is a generic model that can be applied in any service organisation to measure service quality by modifying its domain structure to the specific characteristics of any particular service setting (Jayasundara, Ngulube and Minishi-Majanja, 2009). In addition, Tegambwage and Ame (2016) are of the view that the SERVQUAL scale should be preferred because of its superior diagnostic power. According to Ko and Chou (2020), in agreement with Robinson (1999), SERVQUAL is the most widely used instrument for measuring service quality and since the 1990s, it has contributed much to the understanding of service quality and its measurement. Manewe-Sisa (2013) states that one of the merits of SERVQUAL is that it focuses on both expectations and perceptions, which are vital in evaluating service quality. She notes that the service provider's perceptions and expectations mainly affect the design and delivery of services offered directly and that customers' perceptions more directly affect the evaluation of the services provided.

SERVQUAL is used to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of service quality, and it has been regarded as the most suitable measurement, according to Ko and Chou (2020). The scholars indicated that the SERVQUAL model proposes that service quality is measured based on five dimensions, which are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, as shown in figure 1.1.
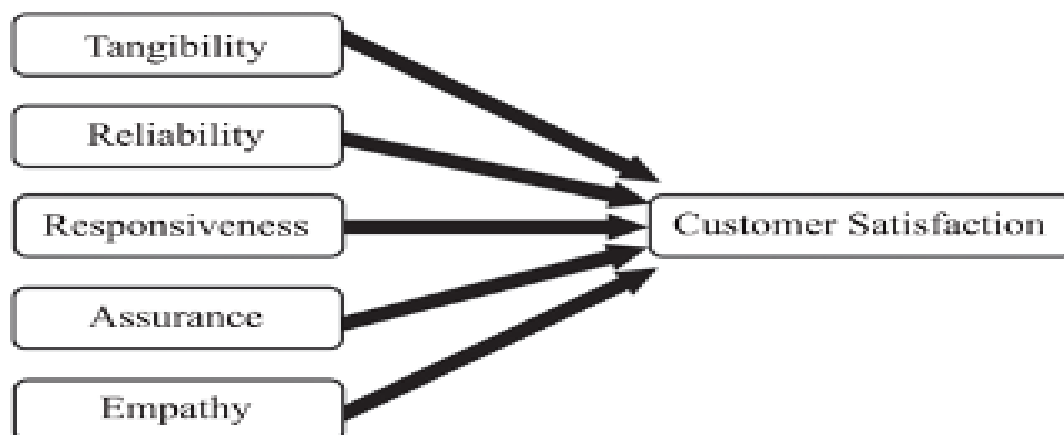

Figure 1.1: Dimensions of SERVQUAL Model (Source: Shafiq, Mostafiz & Taniguchi, 2019:65)

This study used four dimensions of the SERVQUAL model: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, as already discussed. Assurance was not used because it was built into tangibility and reliability.

Literature review

In the section below, literature related to the study is reviewed.

Concepts of records management and customer satisfaction

Records management is concerned with achieving efficiency and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal of records (IRMT, 2009). It focuses on managing records to meet and support business needs. It ensures that only records that are required are being kept. It also ensures that records are easily retrieved and available when needed. Therefore, records management is concerned with customer satisfaction. BNARS (2020) observed that the quality of the services the government bodies deliver to their customers depend on how well they can create, store, retrieve, use and manage relevant information. It is needed to support decision-making, for general operation, and as evidence of policies and activities. Records management plays a critical role in ensuring good governance. Well-managed records facilitate the achievement of transparency and accountability in public administration. Governments rely on records to make precise decisions.

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how products and services supplied by an organisation meet customer expectation. It is a key element of any organisational strategy as customers are a central part of all services. Their loyalty is earned by means of excellent customer service. Accomplishing customer satisfaction entails "customer-oriented culture; an organization that centres on the customer, employee empowerment; process ownership; team building; and partnering with customers and supplies" (Mostaghel, 2006:19). Customer satisfaction varies depending on the situation and the product or service. In the public sector, the definition of customer satisfaction is often linked to both the personal interaction with the service provider and the outcomes experienced by service users. CSSP (2007) indicates that customer satisfaction research and direct consumer involvement help organisations to ensure that strategic planning puts customers first. The first strategic objective in BEC's corporate scorecard talks about customers/ stakeholders. This means that the organisation has customer satisfaction at a priority as well.

RMU facilities, equipment, and human resource

Objective one of this study sought to find out if BEC RMU had enough facilities, equipment and human resources enabling it to serve its customers. RMU should have up to date equipment, facilities and personnel that are appealing to customers. This objective addressed the dimension of tangibility, which includes facilities, equipment and human resources as explained next.

Facilities and equipment

In order for records management personnel to provide good and diligent customer service, they should have adequate and up to date facilities and equipment. For example, they need computers for easy and efficient communication and proper storage facilities to enable them to store and retrieve their records easily. The RMU should have modern equipment and visually appealing facilities because these are usually associated with good service. RMU

also needs to be secure and safe in order to handle sensitive material and have enough space to serve walk-in customers.

Human resources

Organisations need to engage personnel who have professional qualifications in records management or archives to manage their records and undertake highly technical processes such as classification, preparing disposition schedules and system design (International Council on Archives, 2016; ISO 15489-2: 2001). If all these are done properly, they lead to good customer service which results in customer satisfaction. The staff should be motivated, available and willing to help customers at all times and have a neat and professional appearance. It is essential that all staff understand their responsibilities and the rationale behind the authority's records management system. The staff need basic training in records management in order to effectively use, maintain and manage records. The organisation should designate and authorise a senior manager to take overall responsibility for records management (Crockett, 2006). All these would only be possible if there is top management support from the organisation concerned. Maseh and Mutula (2016) attest that retention decisions must be approved by the senior executives of the organisation because they are ultimately responsible for records management policy and compliance.

Standards and policies

Objective two of the study sought to establish whether there are any standards and policies that guide service delivery at BEC RMU in order to maintain quality and reliable services. This objective was to address the dimension of reliability. Reliability refers to the ability to provide services reliably and accurately. It is very important to provide services right the first time, as promised and at the promised time. Customers consider service providers to be meeting their expectations if the service is delivered within the set time, cost and speed. Hence, all organisations should define and document policies and standards for records management and should make sure that the policies are implemented and maintained at all levels in the organisation. RMU should maintain error-free records and its staff should be dependable in handling customers' service problems. In order to provide the promised, reliable and accurate services, there should be policies and standards that guide the whole service.

Customer needs

Objective three sought to assess whether RMU recognised and met its customer needs. This was guided by the dimension of responsiveness. Customer responsiveness is the ability of an organisation to recognise and respond to changing customer needs. The amount of time it takes to help customers is of great importance in customer satisfaction. Responsiveness is critical for successful customer satisfaction. Meeting customer needs and recognizing the customers are essential in customer satisfaction. The organisation should keep its customers informed as to when services will be performed and provide prompt service to customers. RMU staff should be willing to help customers at all times and should be ready to respond to customers' requests. For example, RMU should be accessible; there should be no waiting and staff should be willing to listen. According to Toister (2012), customers often expect an immediate resolution through various channels such as chat, phone and in-person resolutions, and define customer service excellence through the response rate. Slow responsiveness irritates customers and wastes time. Responsiveness is the best tool for keeping customers happy and for an organisation to learn how to improve their service. Mmutle (2017) states that service quality should be treated as an antecedent of customer satisfaction.

Research methodology

The study convergent mixed methods research approach with survey, interview, participant observation and document review as data collection tools. This allowed the researchers to enrich and strengthen the results by using multiple methods, different methods of data collection, different worldviews and assumptions, and analysis to study the same phenomenon.

The target population for this study comprised BEC action officers (internal customers), records officers and external customers. Action officers included managers and professional officers. External customers included schools, teachers, courier companies, and others. For external customers, an average of 10 to 15 customers visited RMU on a daily basis. The target population of the study was 106.

Parallel sampling was used for this study, that is, different samples for qualitative and quantitative study phases. In this regard, census was used to select the participants for the study. This study used closed-ended self-administered questionnaires to collect data. The interviews were conducted face to face with the records officers. Meetings were scheduled according to the respondents' convenience and availability, and the researcher met two people per day.

The study examined various documents to identify similar research done on customer satisfaction and records management services. Legislative framework regulating the management of public records in Botswana, that is, BNARS procedures manual as well as BEC's processes and procedures for records management were examined to determine if the current BEC records management services are compliant. Other documents such as journals, books and relevant theses were also used for literature review.

For analysing the data from the questionnaire, the researcher prepared the data and coded all the structured questions numerically for capturing and analysis in IBM SPSS version 20. Figures were generated in Microsoft Excel to present the research findings. Interviews and observations were analysed using thematic analysis and coding.

Findings of the study

The following section focuses on the presentation of the study findings.

Facilities and equipment at BEC RMU

Availability of technologies
Firstly, action officers and records officers were asked about the availability of technologies at the BEC RMU that are used for records management and provision of services. The study revealed that 36 (78.3%) out of 46 action officers and 4 (80%) out of 5 records officers indicated that there were computers. A total of 35 (76.1%) action officers and 3 (60%) records officers said that the internet and email existed at BEC. A total of 34 (73.9%) action officers and 3 (60%) records officers stated that printers were available. However, the researcher's observation revealed that even though most of RMU services were undertaken manually, all 5 RMU officers had computers. A follow-up interview revealed that internet and e-mail services were mostly used by action officers when they sent documents to be

printed by RMU. Therefore, computers, printers, internet, and emails were available at BEC for use in records management and records services.

Presentation of facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials
Furthermore, action officers were asked to indicate whether the physical facilities, equipment and communication materials were attractive and whether the personnel looked presentable. The study revealed that out of 46 action officers, 24 (52.2%) indicated that the facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials were all presentable, while 22 (47.8%) stated that not all of these were presentable.

Access in RMU
Action officers were further asked if non-records officers were allowed in RMU. The findings revealed that out of 46 respondents, 13 (28.3%) said that non-records officers were allowed in RMU, while 33 (71.7%) said that they were not allowed. The results showed that the majority believed that non-records officers were not allowed in RMU.

Distribution of files/records to action officers
Action officers were also asked to indicate whether they were satisfied with how files or records were circulated to them. The responses revealed that, out of 46 action officers, 17 (37%) indicated that they were satisfied with how files or records were distributed to them, while 29 (63%) indicated that they were not. These findings suggested that the majority of action officers were not satisfied with how files or records were circulated to them. Therefore, they did not believe that files or records were being circulated properly within the organisation.

Security of records
Action officers were further asked to indicate whether records and information documents were held securely at RMU. The findings revealed that out of 46 action officers, 27 (58.7%) stated that they were not sure as to whether records and information documents were held securely, 17 (37.0%) felt that they were held securely, while 2 (4.3%) thought that they were not. However, the researcher observed that records kept by BEC RMU were very secure since they were kept in steel cabinets and only records officers had access to them. Further observations revealed that customers were not allowed to enter the records storage areas. Access cards were used to enter RMU, and only authorised personnel had access. Through observation, it was established that there was also a CCTV camera in the RMU. These findings suggested that records at RMU were secure.

Human resources

Adequacy of staff
Action officers were requested to indicate if RMU was adequately staffed to serve customers. The findings revealed that out of 46 action officers, 29 (63%) said that RMU was adequately staffed and 17 (37%) said that it was not. The findings confirmed that RMU was adequately staffed, although some respondents believed it was not.

Training in records management and customer care
Records officers were asked if they had been trained in records management. All 5 (100%) records officers confirmed that they had been trained in records management. The respondents were further asked whether they had been trained in customer care and handling of customer complaints. The results revealed that out of the 5 records officers, 3 (60%) said

they had been trained in customer care and handling of customer complaints, while the remaining 2 (40%) had never been trained. These results revealed that some of the records officers had been trained in customer care while some had not.

Taking pride in job
Action officers and records officers were further asked if the RMU staff took pride in their job. The results showed that out of 46 action officers, 20 (44%) responded that RMU staff took pride in their job, 18 (39%) said average and 8 (17%) stated that they did not. Out of 5 records officers, 4 (80%) said they took pride in their job, whereas 1 (20%) said he/she did not.

Personal sacrifice to serve customers
In addition, the respondents were asked whether RMU personnel made personal sacrifices to serve customers. The results showed that out of 46 action officers, 29 (63%) said that they did not make any personal sacrifices, whereas 17 (37%) said they did. Out of 5 records officers, 4 (80%) said that RMU staff made personal sacrifices, while 1 (20%) said that they did not. These findings showed that the majority of action officers believed that RMU personnel did not make personal sacrifices.

Adequate support from management
Furthermore, records officers were asked whether RMU personnel received adequate support from management in order to do their job well. The findings revealed that out of 5 records officers' respondents, 3 (60%) said that they did not receive adequate support, while 2 (40%) said they did. These findings showed that the majority of the records officers were not satisfied with the support they received from management.
Provision of customer service
Lastly, action officers were asked how they found RMU staff in terms of providing customer service. They had to specify this against their competence, responsiveness, friendliness, politeness and respectfulness, helpfulness, understand informational needs of customers, reliability or dependability and professional behaviour. Respondents were given three options, yes, no and average. The responses are presented in Table1.

Table 1: Provision of customer service

Attributes	Yes		NO		Average	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Competency	17	37%	6	13%	23	50%
Responsiveness	14	31%	8	17%	24	52%
Friendliness, politeness and respectfulness	32	70%	3	7%	11	24%
Helpfulness	21	46%	1	2%	24	52%
Understand informational needs of customers:	12	26%	7	15%	27	59%
Reliability or dependability	19	41%	6	13%	21	46%

Professional behaviour	21	46%	5	11%	20	43%

Source: Field data, 2019

Standards and policies that guide service delivery

The second objective sought to establish whether there were any standards or polices that guided service delivery at BEC RMU in order to maintain quality and reliable services. In order to address this objective, which was specific to records officers, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and observations. The objective was divided into two sections; the first section addressed the standards while the second focused on policies.

Standards
Firstly, records officers were asked if records management services were guided by any standards. The findings showed that out of 5 respondents, 3 (60%) said that the services were not guided by any standards, while 2 (40%) said they were. A follow-up interview with records officers and observations by the researcher revealed that customer service standards had been documented and approved in 2017.

Adherence to customer service standards
Furthermore, records officers were asked if records management services were delivered in accordance with customer service standards. The results showed that out of 5 respondents, 3 (60%) felt that records management services were delivered in accordance with customer service standards, while 2 (40%) said that they were not. These findings revealed that the majority of respondents confirmed that records management services were delivered in accordance with customer service standards. Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they followed the standards set by the Records Management Procedures Manual in their daily activities. Their responses showed that out of 5 respondents, 2 (40%) indicated that they always followed the standards, while 2 (40%) said sometimes and 1 (20%) never.

Usefulness of CSS
In addition, records officers were asked if they found the customer service standards useful in customer service. The findings revealed that out of 5 records officers, 4 (80%) said they were not useful and 1(20) said they were useful.

File classification scheme
Records officers were also asked if they had an approved classification scheme. All 5 the records officers (100%) stated that they did not have an approved classification scheme. These findings showed that the respondents were sure that there was no approved classification scheme.

Processing mail
Records officers were further asked whether they processed incoming mail before action was taken. Out of 5 respondents, 3 (60%) said that the incoming mail was always processed before action was taken, while 2 (40%) said it was not always processed. Additionally, the respondents were asked whether there were instances where outgoing mail was dispatched without being processed. Out of 5 records officers, 3 (60%) said that there were no such instances, while 2 (40%) said there were such instances. An observation by the researcher confirmed that the incoming and outgoing mails were always processed before action was

taken. These findings confirm that the incoming and outgoing mails were processed before action was taken.

Disaster management plan
Furthermore, records officers were asked whether they had a disaster management plan. All 5 (100%) records officers acknowledged that they did not have a disaster management plan. A follow-up interview revealed that there was indeed no disaster management plan in the RMU. These findings confirmed that BEC RMU had no disaster management plan.

Rules and regulations that govern access to records
Records officers were also asked if they had rules and regulations that governed access to records. The results revealed that out of the 5 RMU officers, 2 (40%) stated that they had rules and regulations that governed access to records, 2 (40%) were not sure and 1 (20%) said no.

Records management policy
Records officers were asked if they had an approved records management policy. All 5 (100%) the records officers acknowledged that there was no approved records management policy at BEC. A follow-up interview by the researcher noted that the records management policy was being developed.

Customer service programme
Records officers were further asked if they had a customer care or service programme. Of the 5 records officers, 3 (60%) were not sure, while 2 (40%) said there was none. These findings suggested that there had been a customer service programme at BEC RMU, it was not known by the respondents, as no one was able to attest to its existence.

Customer needs

This objective addressed issues of customer needs. Participants were engaged through questionnaires, interview, and observations.

Usage of RMU services
 Out of 46 action officers, 19 (41.3%) often used RMU whilst 18 (39.1%) used it sometimes and only 9 (19.6%) used it daily. These findings indicate that RMU was used by different types of clients from frequent users to occasional visitors who come once in a while.

Orientation of action officers
Action officers were asked whether RMU orientated them upon arrival at BEC on records management procedures, expectations, and service standards. Out of 46 action officers, 43 (93.5%) said that there was no orientation, while 3 (6.5%) said there was. These findings confirmed that most of the action officers were not oriented on arrival at BEC.

Sensitising customers on records management
Action officers were asked how often RMU sensitises customers on records management issues. Out of 46 action officers, 28 (60.9%) said that customers were sometimes sensitised and 18 (39.1%) revealed that they were never sensitised. These findings showed that RMU was not consistent in sensitising its customers.

RMU officers listen to customers, acknowledge their comments and keep them informed
Action officers were further asked whether RMU staff listened to customers, acknowledged their comments, and kept them informed. Out of 46 action officers, 32 (69.6%) said sometimes, 11 (23.9%) never and 3 (6.5%) acknowledged that RMU staff always listened to customers, acknowledged their comments, and kept them informed. These findings showed mixed feelings from different customers.

Assessment of the customer service
Action officers and records officers were asked how often the RMU assessed the customer service provided. Out of 46 action officers, 39 (85%) said never, 5 (11%) said annually and 2 (4%) said biannually. In contrast, out of the 5 records officers, 4 (80%) said never and 1(20%) said frequently. A follow-up interview with RMU officers revealed that customers never assessed the services provided by RMU.

Customer feedback
Respondents were asked to indicate how RMU received feedback from customers. Their responses are summarised in Figure 1.
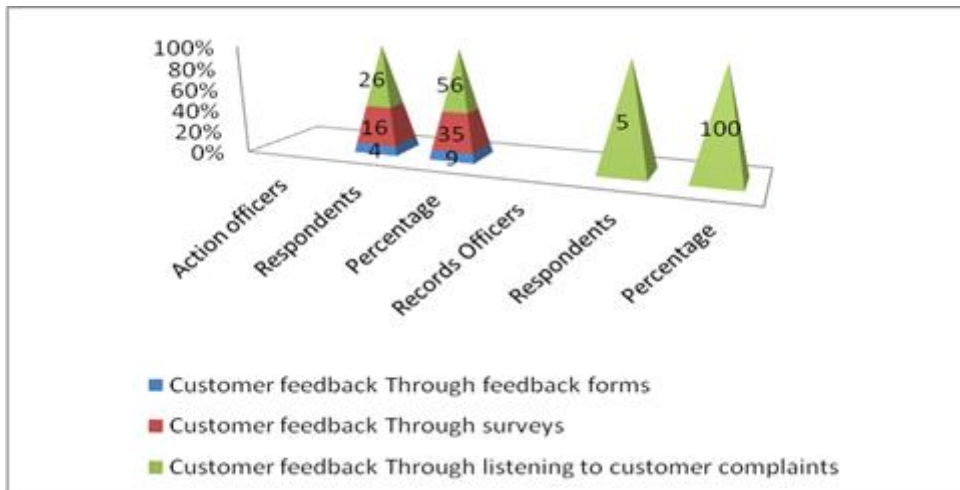

Figure 1: Customer feedback (Field data, 2019)

Figure 1 reveals that out of 46 action officers, 26 (56%) identified listening to customer complaints, 16 (35%) through surveys and 4 (9%) via feedback forms. In addition, all 5 (100%) RMU officers acknowledged that they received customer feedback through listening to customer complaints. Thus, RMU received feedback from customers through surveys, feedback forms and listening to customer complaints.

Forums for expressing customer complaints/dissatisfaction
Out of 46 action officers, 28 (61%) indicated that they had no such forums, while 18 (39%) said there are. Therefore, the majority of RMU customers were not aware of any forums available for them to express their complaints about the services they received from BEC RMU.

Meeting and matching customer needs
Out of 46 action officers, 24 (52%) revealed that their customer needs were met, while 22 (48%) said they were not met. Respondents were further asked if the records services

provided to them by the RMU matched their needs. The responses revealed that out of 46 action officers, 28 (61%) acknowledged that the records services matched their needs and 18 (39%) said they did not. The majority of the respondents acknowledged that the records services rendered by RMU met and matched customer needs.

Procedures for handling customer complaints
All 5 (100%) the records officers acknowledged that RMU did not have procedures. Action officers were also asked to state whether RMU dealt with customer complaints and problems satisfactorily. Out of 46 action officers, 27 (59%) claimed RMU did not deal with customer complaints satisfactorily, while 19 (41%) disagreed.

Notifying senior management of customer complaints
Records officers were further asked whether senior management was notified of customer complaints. Out of the 5 respondents, 4 (80%) said no and 1 (20%) said yes.

Ensuring customer satisfaction
In addition, records officers were asked how RMU ensured customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction was measured against providing relevant information, providing friendly service, willingness to help customers, dependability, and reliability of RMU staff, making personal sacrifices to help customers, attending to customer complaints on time and providing timely services. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Ensuring customer satisfaction

Attributes	Yes		NO	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Providing relevant information	5	100%	0	0%
Providing friendly service	3	60%	2	40%
Always willing to help customers	3	60%	2	40%
Being dependable or reliable	4	80%	1	20%
Making personal sacrifices to help customers	3	60%	2	40%
Attending to customer complaints on time	3	60%	2	40%
Providing timely services	4	80%	1	20%

Source: Field data, 2019

Table 2 shows that of the 5 records officers, the following were portrayed:

a) Providing relevant information; all 5 (100%) RMU officers said that RMU ensured customer satisfaction by providing relevant information.

b) Providing friendly service: 3 (60%) stated that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction by providing friendly service, while 2 (40%) said no.

c) Always willing to help customers; 3 (60%) said RMU staff were always willing to help customers, while 2 (40%) said no.

d) Being dependable or reliable; 4 (80%) indicated that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction by being dependable, while 1 (20%) said they were not.

e) Making personal sacrifices to help customers; 3 (60%) acknowledged that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction through making personal sacrifices to help customers and 2 (40%) said that they did not.

f) Attending to customer complaints on time; 3 (60%) indicated that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction by attending to customer complaints on time, while 2 (40%) answered said they did not.

g) Providing timely services; 4 (80%) indicated that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction by providing timely services, whereas 1 (20%) said that they did not.

These findings revealed that the majority of records officers believed that RMU staff ensured customer satisfaction by providing relevant information, providing friendly service, were always willing to help customers by being dependable or reliable, making personal sacrifices, attending to customer complaints on time and providing timely services.

Consistency in records management services
Action officers were asked whether the level of records management service was consistent at all times and for all customers. Out of 46 action officers, 25 (54%) said it was not, while 21 (46%) said it was. Therefore, the majority of respondents believed that the level of records management services was consistent at all times and for all customers.

Consultation and involvement in the process of records service improvement
Action officers were asked whether they were consulted and involved in records service improvement. The results showed that out of 46 respondents, 37 (80%) said no and 9 (20%) said they were consulted. Respondents were further asked whether organised information was always available. Out of 46, 26 (57%) said sometimes, 13 (28%) always and 7 (15%) said it was not.

Location and accessibility of RMU
Action officers were asked if RMU was conveniently located. Out of 46 action officers, 42 (91%) said yes while 4 (9%) said it was not. The findings confirmed that the majority of respondents believed that RMU was conveniently located. Action officers were also asked if it was easy to reach RMU, either in person, telephone or email. The responses revealed that out of 46 respondents, 44 (96%) said it was easy to reach RMU and 2 (4%) said it was not.

Timely information
Action officers were asked whether the information service was performed timeously. Out of 46 respondents, 25 (54%) said it was, while 21 (46%) said it was not.

Overall records management customer service
Lastly, action officers were asked to rate the overall records management customer service of BEC RMU. The results revealed that out of 46 respondents, 24 (52%) said BEC RMU's customer service was good, 13 (28%) were neutral, 4 (9%) said it was poor, 3 (7%) said very good and 2 (4%) said very poor.

Discussion of findings

Facilities, equipment, and human resource at BEC RMU
Objective one addressed the first dimension of the SERVQUAL model, which looks at the tangibles. Availability of technology in an RMU is crucial, especially –during the Covid-19 pandemic where exchange of hard documents was discouraged, and people had to observe social distance.

The study established that BEC RMU officers and the action officers had and used computers, internet, emails, and printers for service delivery. There were lockable steel cupboards for keeping physical records and there were CCTV cameras in the RMU to monitor and enhance the security of the records. The study further established that all records officers were trained in records management. This means that records officers at the BEC RMU are expected to do better as knowledgeable people. Wood, Tyler and Papachristos (2020) argue that training helps to lower the use of force and complaints against records officers.

Standards and policies that guide service delivery at BEC RMU
Objective two addressed the second dimension of the SERVQAL model, which is reliability of the services provided by BEC RMU to its customers. This objective looked at the ability of the organisation to perform and provide the promised service reliably and accurately.

This study established that RMU had documented and approved customer service standards. However, the respondents exhibited mixed perceptions, as 3 (60%) records officers said that records management services were delivered in accordance with customer service standards, while 2 (40%) did not agree with that. This means that records officers needed to be sensitised on service standards frequently to keep them abreast.

A lack of customer service standards and policies poses challenges to operations in records management units. These challenges have implications for the quality of service rendered by the organisation (Keakopa, 2019). Furthermore, Keakopa (2013) states that BEC was among some of the organisations which showed interest in being assisted to develop standards and policies for records management. Hence, at the time of the study, the records management policy was in the development stage but now it is fully approved and implemented at BEC.

This study established that there was no disaster management plan at BEC RMU. As pointed out by the IRMT (1999), there was a risk that no organisation is totally immune to emergencies or disasters. Failure to resume operations after a disaster can compromise delivery of services by the RMU, as there will be no records to refer to, which would lead to poor service delivery.

The study also revealed that there were no rules and regulations that governed access to records and no customer service programme at BEC RMU, as 2 (40%) records officers said that they did not have it and 3 (60%) were not sure. Finally, this study revealed that RMU officers were guided by BNARS Records Management Procedures Manual, as shown by 4 (80%) records officers. Customer service standards and policies are very important for the successful running of the records management unit in an organisation.

Customer needs
Objective three focused on the third dimension of the SERVQUAL model of responsiveness. According to Ko and Chou (2020), the ability of an organisation to recognise and meet its customers' needs, including its ability to identify the information needs of its customers, helps to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of service offered by the

organisation according to the SERVQUAL model. Looking at whether RMU recognised and met its customers' needs, this study revealed that 43 (93.5%) of the respondents indicated that there was no orientation for action officers on arrival at BEC to familiarise themselves with records management procedures, expectations, and service standards. This means that orientation of action officers is an important exercise that must be prioritised by RMU to maximise the organisation's efficiency in meeting its customers' needs.

In addition, the study revealed that RMU sensitised their customers, although not consistently. The study further established that the respondents exhibited mixed feelings about RMU officers listening to customers, acknowledging their comments, and keeping them informed, while others said they never listened, acknowledged or kept customers informed.

The study revealed that 39 (85%) action officers and 4 (80%) records officers stated that they never assessed customer service. In other words, customer services provided by RMU were rarely assessed, as indicated by the few respondents who said it was done annually, biannually, or sometimes. The findings further reflected that RMU mostly received feedback from their customers through feedback forms and through listening to customer complaints. These findings explained why there were mixed feelings of satisfaction among RMU customers. Adjei and Mensah (2016) point out that quality service delivery is guaranteed in a situation where an organisation is always in touch with its customers to understand their concerns and expectations. A lack of assessment of customer service limits the organisation from understanding the customers' needs.

Furthermore, it was established that 28 (61%) action officers indicated that they had no forums of expressing their complaints. A lack of forums for customers to articulate their complaints about the services they received from BEC RMU is a cause for concern. These findings were consistent with those of Mampe and Kalusopa (2012) who indicate that many organisations in African countries lacked structures, which resulted in poor service delivery. Having platforms to address customer complaints helps organisations to make necessary renovations that meet customer needs. In agreement with the lack of platforms to air complaints, only 9 (20%) action officers indicated that they were consulted and involved in the process of records service improvement. As such, Adjei and Mensah (2016) and Shepherd et al. (2010) support the notion that quality records management works hand in hand with understanding the customers' needs and expectations. They further said that this is possible when the organisation involves customers in creating customer service strategies that meet the needs of the customers.

Similarly, there were mixed feelings about RMU meeting customers' needs although there were more customers who believed that their needs were being met. A total of 24 (52%) action officers said that their customer needs were met, while 22 (48%) said they were not. This was also the case with the customers who said the services provided by RMU matched their needs versus those who said it did not. Smallwood (2013) indicates that customers are more satisfied with a company when their needs are met by services rendered by a service provider. Mixed feelings imply that RMU have a combination of satisfied and dissatisfied customers. However, a significant number of the unsatisfied customers came from the action officers who felt that their needs were not being met. This could be explained by the fact that the internal customers have more interaction with RMU than the external customers.

Looking at how RMU dealt with the customer complaints and problems 27 (59%), action officers were more satisfied. In addition, 21 (46%) action officers believed that there was

consistency at all times of the day and for all customers in the records management services. On this, Kim and Feldman (2011) emphasised that it is important for an organisation to put in place stable and practical structures that help the institution to comprehend the needs and meet the expectations of its clients. These authors revealed that the SERVQUAL model encourages the understanding of customers' needs and expectations for an organisation to be able to put in place structures that support quality service delivery.

The study found that notifying the senior management of customer complaints was rare in RMU. This was revealed by 4 (80%) records officers who said the senior management was never notified of customer complaints. RMU staff should ensure customer satisfaction by providing relevant information, providing friendly service, always willing to help customers, being dependable or reliable, making personal sacrifices to help customers, attending to customer complaints on time and providing timely services. These findings can be explained by the use of the BNARS Records Management Procedures Manual which most records officers said guides them in service delivery. The BNARS Records Management Procedures Manual provides guidance to the public sector for the undertaking of records management activities and programmes, in accordance with the requirements of the National Archives and Records Services (NARS) Act, international records management standards like ISO 15489 and any other relevant national legislation (BNARS, 2009).

The study further revealed that customers are not always happy about the availability of organised information in RMU. The study confirmed that out of 46 action officers, 13 (28%) believed that organised information was always available, while 7 (15%) said it was not and 26 (57%) indicated that it was sometimes available. If it takes time to act on correspondences because files cannot be located or documents are misfiled, it might lead to serious inconvenience in the whole examination cycle. Customer needs are paramount in service delivery.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the foregoing, it could be concluded that BEC RMU had adequate facilities, equipment and human resources that enable it to serve its customers. However, improvements and additions are needed for quality service delivery. There were customer service standards that guided service delivery at BEC RMU in order to maintain quality and reliable services. The RMU was also guided by the BNARS Records Management Procedures Manual just like most of the records management units in Botswana. BEC RMU recognised and met its customer needs, but not all customers were satisfied. In addition, the RMU staff rarely conducted user needs assessment surveys to identify the information needs of their customers. It was revealed that BEC RMU staff used face-to-face communication, telephone, and emails to communicate with their customers. The study confirmed that BEC RMU were facing challenges that compromised service delivery and hence affect customer satisfaction at BEC RMU, which include a lack of top management support, a lack of training, inadequate staff and limited promotional aspects.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1: Distribution of files to action officers
The study reflected that majority of action officers were not satisfied with how files were circulated in the organisation. This study recommends that RMU should introduce an Electronic Records Management System to enhance the file tracking system for efficiency in service delivery and to reduce human contact, especially in the era of Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendation 2: Service standards and policies

The study found out that there were documented customer service standards and the records management policy was underdevelopment, but in an advanced stage at the time of data collection for the study. This study recommends that the BEC RMU management should have internal workshops to sensitise each other about the documented customer service standards and the policy upon its approval. The customer service standards and RMU policy should be adhered strictly.

Recommendation 3: Disaster management plan

The study found that there was no disaster management plan in place at BEC RMU. It is therefore recommended that RMU should develop a disaster management plan that would help with business continuity in the event of a disaster. RMU should identify possible disasters and risks that could affect the organisation and identify prevention measures and mitigations.

Recommendation 4: Customer service programme

A customer service programme covers most aspects of customer service such as customer feedback, handling of customer complaints and general office etiquette. This study, therefore, recommends that the organisation should develop a customer service programme since the respondents could not confirm the existence of such a document in BEC RMU.

Recommendation 5: Orientation of action officers

It was revealed that most action officers are not orientated or inducted in records management procedures, expectations, and service standards upon arrival in BEC. This study, therefore, recommends that RMU should orientate and induct the newly appointed action officers upon arrival in BEC. RMU should also conduct sensitisation workshops to help action officers with skills on records management.

Recommendation 6: Assessment of the customer service

This study found that both the internal and external customers of RMU never assessed the services provided by RMU. The study therefore recommends that customers should be given platforms to assess the service they receive from RMU. Customers need to be involved so that RMU can receive their feedback, which will result in better understanding of customer needs and expectations and hence improve service delivery.

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