

The Impact of Sustainable Quality Management Practices on Customer Satisfaction:

An Applied Study on Service Organizations in Saudi Arabia

أثر ممارسات إدارة الجودة المستدامة على رضا العملاء:

دراسة ميدانية على منظمات الخدمات في المملكة العربية السعودية

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Abstract:

As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is leaning towards economic diversification, this research investigates the impact of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction within service organizations to enhance the overall experience and help organizations focus on the growth and sustainability. Understanding how sustainable practices influence customer perceptions and loyalty is becoming more and more essential as the demand for corporate social responsibility increases. A mixed-methods approach is used in the study, which combines qualitative interviews with service organization representatives and customers in different sectors to view their perception. The findings of this research provide an insight into the impact of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction in Saudi Arabia, specifically targeting the service organizations. Where the research showed that implementing sustainable quality management practices can actually give the organization or firm an advantage. Where there is a positive impact to the organization when implementing sustainable quality management practices. Thus, it is beneficial for an organization to invest and enhance practices such as, energy efficiency, employee training and engagement, customer feedback integration, continuous improvement programs. This in return will effectively enhance customer loyalty and enhance the overall organizational benefit. Additionally, this highlights the need for any organization to develop a sustainable quality management approach in order for them to develop and compete in the local and international market.

في ظل توجه المملكة العربية السعودية نحو التنوع الاقتصادي، يهتم هذا البحث في تأثير ممارسات إدارة الجودة المستدامة على رضا العملاء في مؤسسات الخدمات، بهدف تحسين التجربة الشاملة ومساعدة المؤسسات على التركيز على النمو والاستدامة. ويزداد فهم كيفية تأثير ممارسات الاستدامة على تصورات العملاء وولائهم للشركة لاسيما مع تزايد الطلب على المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات. ويستخدم البحث نهجاً متعدد الأساليب، يجمع بين المقابلات النوعية مع ممثلي مؤسسات الخدمات والعملاء في قطاعات مختلفة، للاطلاع على تصوراتهم. وفرت نتائج هذا البحث فهماً أعمق لتأثير ممارسات إدارة الجودة المستدامة على رضا العملاء في المملكة العربية السعودية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مؤسسات الخدمات. تُقدم نتائج هذا البحث نظرة ثاقبة حول تأثير ممارسات إدارة الجودة المستدامة على رضا العملاء في المملكة العربية السعودية، مُستهدفةً بشكلٍ خاص مؤسسات الخدمات. حيث أظهر البحث أن تطبيق ممارسات إدارة الجودة المستدامة يُحسن أداء المؤسسة أو الشركة، ويؤثر إيجاباً على أدائها. لذا، من المفيد للمؤسسة الاستثمار في ممارسات مثل كفاءة الطاقة، وتدريب الموظفين وإشراكهم، ودمج ملاحظات العملاء، وبرامج التحسين المستمر، وتعزيزها. وهذا بدوره يُعزز ولاء العملاء ويرفع من منفعة المؤسسة بشكل عام. كما يُبرز هذا ضرورة تطوير أي مؤسسة لنهج إدارة جودة مستدامة لتمكينها من التطور والمنافسة في السوق المحلية والدولية.

Keywords:

Sustainable Quality Management, Customer Satisfaction, Service Organizations.

إدارة الجودة المستدامة، رضا العملاء، منظمات الخدمات.

1. Introduction:

Today's competitive marketplace has introduced the need for sustainability and continuous improvement to compete and drive the business towards success. Incorporating sustainable quality management practices into firms is essential and a major business driver that needs focus to successfully implement business plans and manage the growth of organizations and competitiveness. Customer loyalty and satisfaction is one of the aspects that every organization should care about and implementing sustainable quality management techniques can help in increasing the overall loyalty and satisfaction. The main objective of conducting this research was to investigate the impact of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction within the service organizations in Saudi Arabia. [1]

As organizations worldwide aim to pursue general economic growth, prioritizing quality and sustainability is becoming more essential. The implementation of sustainable quality management (SQM) practices can support in influencing customer perceptions and overall satisfaction, and enhancing customer experiences in service sectors as this study is going to support. [2] Saudi Arabia as part of the global trend, also heads towards economic diversification, quality and sustainability prioritization. Where service organizations form a key part of developing the Kingdom's economy, and in this regard, this applied study will yield actionable insights for business leaders who seek to improve their competitive strategy. In doing so, this paper aims to highlight the importance of sustainability as an emerging form of competitive advantage for the implementation of sustained customer loyalty to promote organizational excellence.

This subject is can be overlooked by many organizations due to the time and effort they possess. Therefore, shedding the light on such research and providing feedback from customer service employees, data analysts and customers within service organizations can support in enhancing many other organizations performance and reaching a better customer satisfaction rate.

2. Research Problem:

This study addresses the main research concerns essential for analyzing the importance to implement sustainable quality management practices such as energy efficiency, employee training and engagement, customer feedback integration, continuous improvement programs, etc. and their effects on customer satisfaction in Saudi Arabian service organizations. With the demand increase, more organizations are now using sustainable practices to enhance customer experience. This study intends to illustrate how service organizations can enhance the customer satisfaction by receiving feedback and surveying service organizations and what results could lead to implementing such practices. [3]

3. Importance of the Study:

Increasing consumer awareness and demand for corporate social responsibility are driving the integration of sustainable quality management practices in service organizations worldwide. Although several studies have investigated sustainability in a manufacturing and industrial context, there is a lack of research pertaining to the Saudi Arabian context, particularly in the service sector. This research aims to address the gaps in sustainable quality management practices by providing a comprehensive study of the impact of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction in service sector organizations in Saudi Arabia. This is to enhance the understanding of the relationship between sustainable quality management and consumer perceptions and the importance of implementation for organizational growth.

4. Study Objectives:

This study is interested in examining the influence of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction in service organizations in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, the goal of the study is to:

- Identify what sustainable quality management practices are currently practiced in service organizations in Saudi Arabia.
- Evaluate the effect of these practices on customer satisfaction rates.
- Investigate customer satisfaction with sustainable quality management practices in improving their overall service experience.
- Differentiate how various elements impact customer satisfaction in service organizations.
- Offer actionable advice to service organizations on how to improve customer satisfaction using sustainable quality management initiatives.

5. Theoretical Literature of the Study:

The following are essential theoretical principles that apply to this research:

- Customer Loyalty

A commitment to repurchase or rebuy products or services from the same supplier is considered customer loyalty, where loyal customer will most likely buy rather than a normal new customer. It is stated that a consumer is considered loyal if a regularly or repetitive buying behavior in a certain time interval. Another argument is that loyalty is a commitment held deeply to buy or support a product or service even if marketing has faded away and switched to other products or services. Customer loyalty can also be measured from consumer behavior and the willingness to recommend a certain product or service to others. [11]

- Total Quality Management (TQM)

TQM is an approach to organizational management that aims to improve the quality output of an organization in a structured approach. The TQM process includes continuous improvement, employee involvement, and customer-focused culture. It also takes into consideration customer satisfaction as the main goal. The introduction of sustainable practices along with Total Quality Management (TQM) has improved service quality which in return improved customer satisfaction. Also, companies are required to balance between customer demands, environmental duties and net profitability. [14]

- Stakeholder Theory

Organizations must consider the interests of all stakeholders, such as shareholders, employees, suppliers, and the community, according to Stakeholder Theory. This theory highlights including the customers in sustainability, and encouraging them to develop trust and loyalty with the organizations. Sustainability improves customer satisfaction and long-term relationships by addressing stakeholder concerns. [15]

- Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory

According to this theory, customer satisfaction is based on the difference between expectations and perceived performance. With sustainability quality management practices in place, companies should align with service quality and environmental standards. Customer satisfaction is generally higher when perceived performance intersects with desired performance. [16]

- Resource-Based View (RBV)

A strategic management approach determining that the unique resources and capabilities of an organization are critical determinants of its competitive advantage among organizations and overall performance. This perspective can allow the focus on internal characteristics of the firm, emphasizing that not all resources contribute equally to competitive success. Where by considering which resources contribute the most to a successful quality management sustainability, organizations can accordingly act to enhance customer satisfaction and achieve better strategic goals. [17]

- Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior has a major contribution in assessing sustainability practices and their impact on customer satisfaction. Various factors influence customer perceptions, such as values, attitudes, culture and overall awareness. The theory helps in understanding how organizations target and develop sustainable practices to reach market goals. [18]

6. Review of Previous Studies:

The increasing emphasis on sustainability has increased the need for quality management in service organizations. In a region such as Saudi Arabia, economics are shifting towards diversity demanding for responsible business practices. This literature review aims to explore existing and previous research on sustainable quality management practices and related subjects. It will explore relevant sustainable practices, find connections between quality management and consumer behavior. By examining previous studies, this review will identify gaps in the literature, highlight best practices and provide service organizations with implementable sustainable strategies to enhance customer satisfaction. Sustainable quality management practices and customer satisfaction have been studied by different researchers in different industries. In this section, we discuss some key research in addressing sustainability in quality management systems with more focus on service organizations in Saudi Arabia. [19]

- Total Quality Management and Organizational Performance

The researchers included two sets of variables as independent variables in their study, first, overall quality management and its components, including customers, feedback, the work environment, product design, personnel, and supplier connections. The second set is human resources management and its related activities such as the staffing, training, appraisal, rewarding system, and the quality of the employees. Both total quality management and human resources impact was measured depending on each other, where a meaningful relationship has occurred with organizational performance. [20]

- Service Quality and Customer Engagement (CE)

The study revealed that service quality has a significant positive effect toward customer satisfaction in banks. This finding is consistent with previously conducted studies which showed that a significant effect resulted from increasing service quality which affected customer engagement (CE) in the offline context. Service quality generally consists of knowledge of products, faster service, helping customers, willingness to handle customer complaints and overall hospitality and courtesy when serving the customer. If this kind of treatment and quality service was given to the customer, most likely it will enhance the willing to engage with the organization. Additionally, customer who had experienced good quality service will also engage with other customers and recommend to interact with this firm. This positive experience regarding will drive customer engagement on the company. [21]

- Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

In banks, a study was conducted to test customer loyalty and its link with service quality, where there was a significant positive effect. The study provided insights into customers who experienced a good service quality at the bank will stay loyal to it and ultimately showing their loyalty toward the bank and they are less willing to change their banks. There are three key element which contributes to increasing service quality, first, employee responsiveness and dedication when serving its customer, the banking atmosphere and customer comfort, where all of these will affect customer loyalty. Furthermore, loyal customer could also be considered good marketers for the firm's products and services. When the customer is loyal toward an organization, he/she will be more likely to only use the service or product offered by the same organization rather than looking for new alternatives. [22]

- Customer Engagement (CE) and Customer Loyalty

An analysis was done to assess the results of customer engagement and how it is linked with customer loyalty. The study revealed that customer who engages with the firms could be viewed as a loyal customer and will most likely stay with the same firm for a longer time or commitment. The more positive involvement in the company by the customer, the more it increases customer loyalty and their emotional connection. Customers who engage tend to show several behaviors such as identification, enthusiasm, and absorption which also included in the Customer Engagement variable. [23]

- Sustainable Quality Management (SQM) and Organizational Performance

This study was to test the relationship between quality management and sustainability related to organizational performance. The study determined a significant relationship between sustainable quality management and organizational performance. Where there was a relationship between the non-financial and financial performance and independent factors such as top management commitment and employee support. The findings of this study strengthened the importance for organizations to be proactive in integrating SQM aspects into their business. Consequently, more attention has to be taken into consideration to develop an organizational culture of learning and thus allowing the organization to maximize their sustainability which will eventually direct the company to overall enhancement of organizational performance. [24]

- Total Quality Management (TQM) on organizational sustainability

This study contributes to understanding the relationship between TQM and organizational sustainability in the Saudi hotel industry. The study took into consideration 204 middle managers from a total of 932 hotels in the five different Saudi cities randomly. The relationship between independent and dependent variables was analyzed and the results showed a significant positive relationship between TQM and organizational sustainability. [25]

7. Methodology:

This research employs a qualitative methodology to explore the impact of sustainable quality management practices on customer satisfaction within service organizations in Saudi Arabia. Three separate surveys, one for customer service representatives, one for data analysts in the company, and one for customers themselves, was distributed in order to obtain thorough insights. While the data analysts' surveys will concentrate on quantitative measures linked to customer happiness and organizational performance. The employee surveys will evaluate opinions about sustainable practices and their impact on service delivery and their point of view in customer interaction and loyalty. For the survey distributed among customers, they will be surveyed on the overall customer experience and what aspects can be improved. All of this is done with reference to sustainability activities. By obtaining the three essential perspectives,

the study will gain comprehensive feedback of the relationship between customer happiness and sustainable quality management techniques.

7.1. Research Design:

The research design for this study will utilize a structured survey that consists of 7-9 direct multiple choice and open-ended questions to efficiently collect qualitative data.

- Population of the study:

The population of this study comprises three key groups within service organizations in Saudi Arabia: customer service employees, data analysts, and customers.

- Sample characteristics:

The sample for this study was directed to the three main aforementioned groups in three different organizations: Hospitality (Hotels), Food Service (Restaurants) and Car service shops.

- Sample size:

The sample size for this study will be grouped into the three targeted populations of customer service employees, data analysts, and customers within service organizations. For customer service employees, a minimum sample size of 30 participants, and for data analysts, a minimum sample size of 10 participants will be aimed for ensuring a representative perspective on sustainable quality management practices. For the customer segment, a larger sample size of at least 50 respondents to get a range of experiences and opinions. This method will enhance the type of data collected for better validation and results.

- Data collections procedures:

The data collection for this study will be conducted using a structured online survey which will be distributed a Google Forms link, ensuring a streamlined and efficient process. The survey will be designed to gather data from the three mentioned key groups.

- Study determination:

The duration of study and data gatherings will be throughout a period of approximately three months. This timeframe includes the development and testing the survey, in addition to the distribution and collection of responses and the subsequent analysis of the data.

The surveys will be distributed in 2 town hotels with increasing reputation, in addition to 2 restaurants that have dine-in services and care about customer feedback, and finally 2 car general service shops that handle luxury services.

Several aspects and key topics related to sustainable quality management practices will be surveyed, including the implementation of sustainability quality management in service organizations and the impact of the practices on customer satisfaction.

- Method of analysis:

This study will utilize a qualitative approach to provide an understanding of the data including multiple choices and open-ended responses to have a deeper insight. The data analysis will be through gathering the results and finding the trends that effect customer satisfaction and if implementing sustainable quality management practices will support in increasing the organization overall satisfaction and growth.

7.2. Study limits:

- Sample size and representativeness:

The sample size and diversity may limit the study. Even though attempts will be made to diversify the sample, some groups may be overlooked limiting the results output.

- Geographical Focus

The study is limited to some service organizations in a particular region (Western Region) in Saudi Arabia. Thus, generalization of the study outcomes is limited.

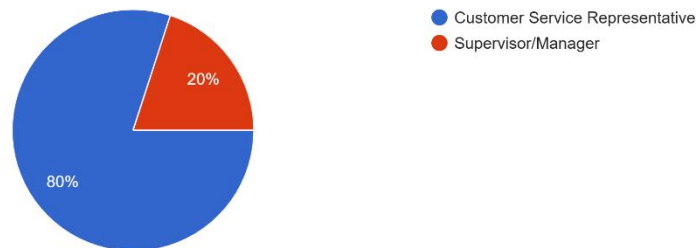
- Qualitative Analysis

Perceptions of the surveyed group can matter a lot in the results outcome. The researcher needs to take a large number of participants in the survey from different parts of Saudi Arabia to generalize this subject effectively.

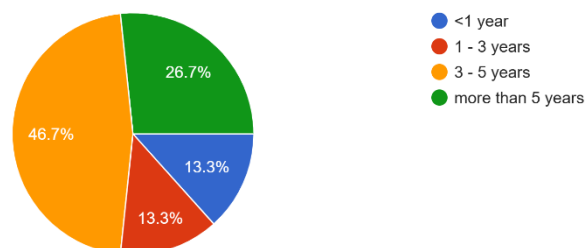
8. Results:

- Customer service employee:

What is your role in the organization?
30 responses

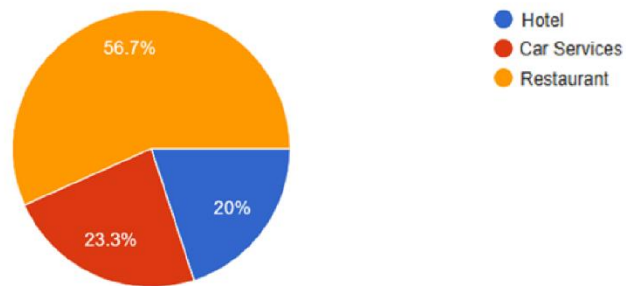


How long have you worked in customer services with organization?
30 responses



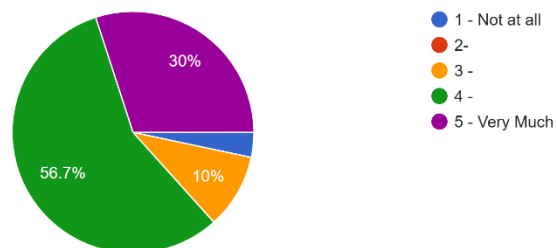
What type of service does your organization provide?

30 responses



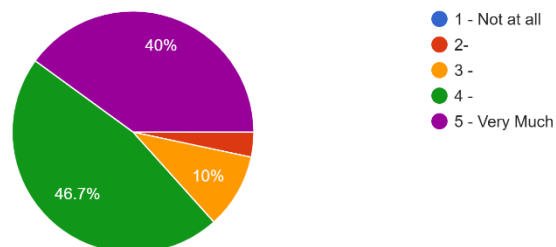
To what extent does your organization implement sustainable quality management practices?

30 responses



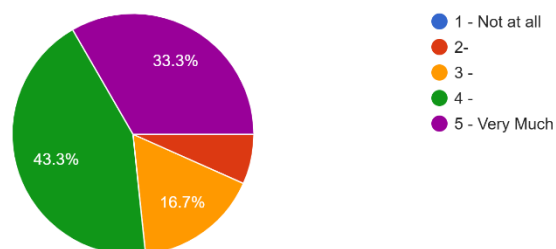
How important do you think implementing sustainable quality management practices contribute to customer satisfaction?

30 responses



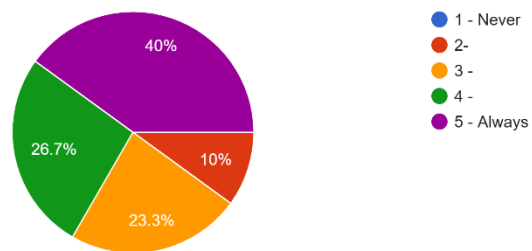
How satisfied do you believe customers are with your services?

30 responses



In your experience, how often do customers express appreciation for sustainable practices?

30 responses



What sustainable quality management practices do you believe have the most positive impact on customer satisfaction?

30 responses

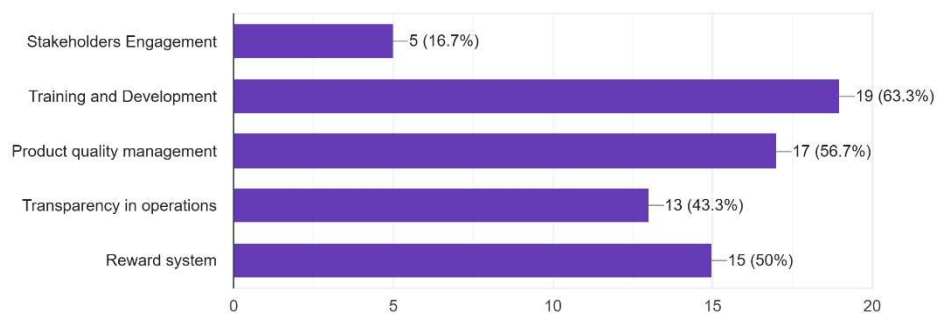
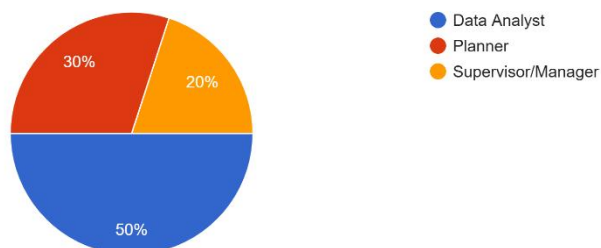


Figure 1 Customer service employee survey results

- Organization data analyst:

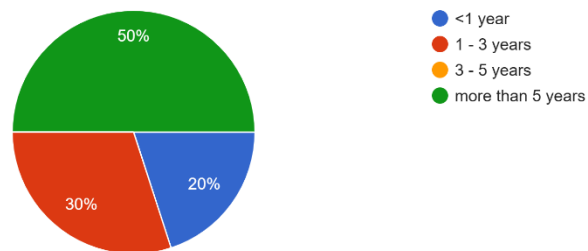
What is your Job title?

10 responses



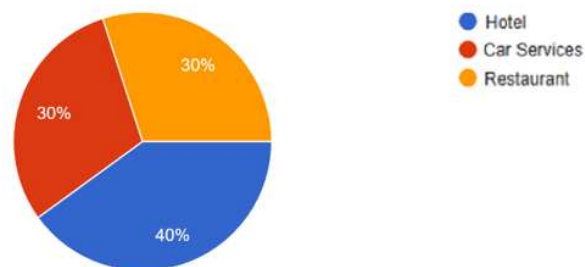
How long have you worked in customer services with organization?

10 responses



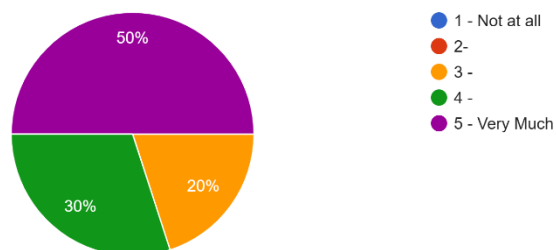
What type of service does your organization provide?

10 responses



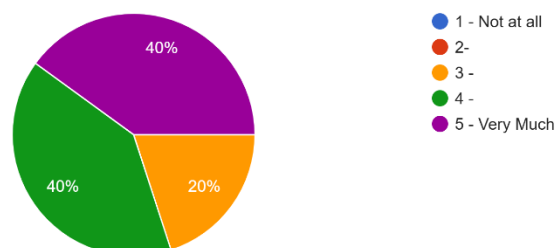
To what extent does your organization implement sustainable quality management practices?

10 responses



How important do you think implementing sustainable quality management practices contribute to customer satisfaction?

10 responses



What sustainable quality management practices do you believe have the most positive impact on customer satisfaction?

10 responses

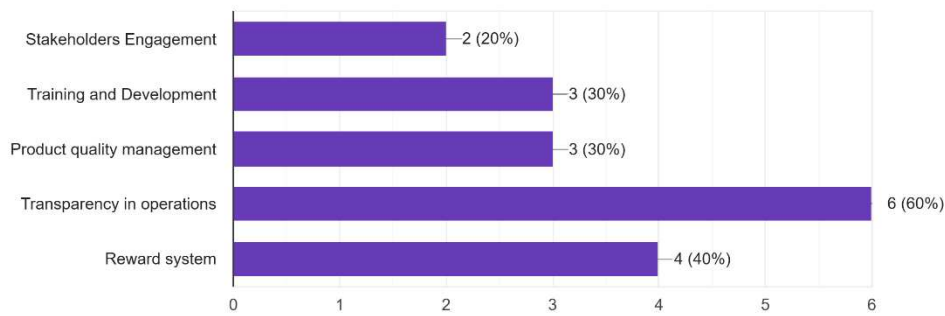
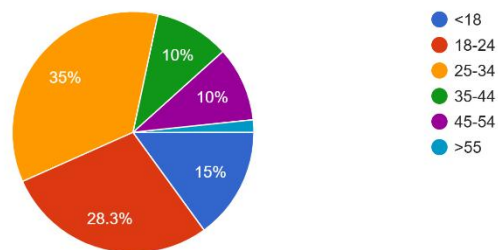


Figure 2 Organization data analyst survey results

- Customer:

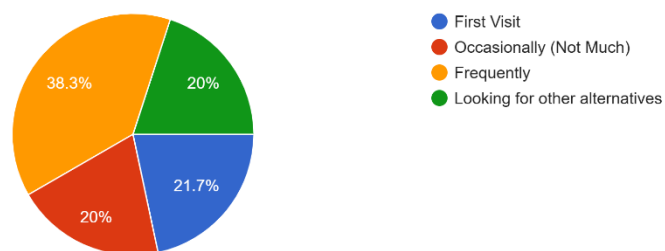
What is your age group?

60 responses



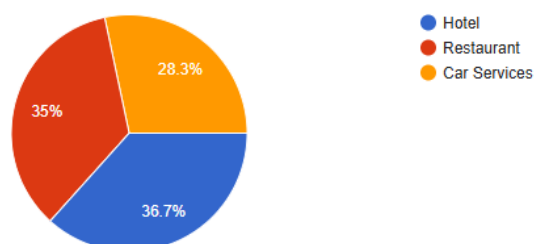
How often do you visit/require services from our organization?

60 responses



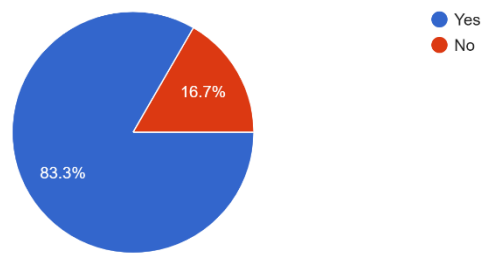
What type of service does your organization provide?

60 responses



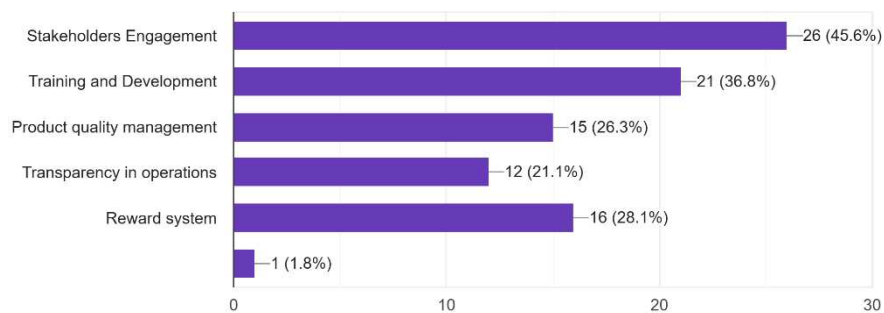
Are you aware of any sustainable Quality management practices implemented by our organization?

60 responses



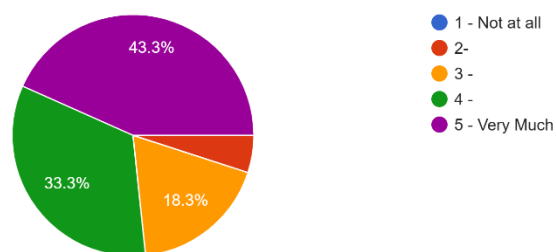
If yes, which sustainable practices are you aware of?

57 responses



How important are sustainable practices to you when choosing a service provider?

60 responses



To what extent do you think sustainable practices enhance your overall satisfaction with our services?

59 responses

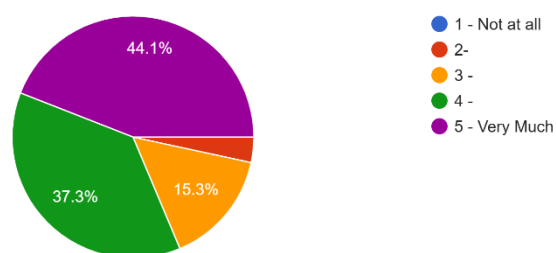


Figure 3 Customer survey results

- Open-ended common question:
- 1. What suggestions do you have for improving the sustainable practices to enhance customer satisfaction?
 - Customers satisfaction by making the product a better quality
 - Increased Warranty
 - Employees rewarding system
 - Employee engagement
 - Good quality management
 - Good quality assurance
 - Green energy sources
 - Good customer interference
 - Sustainable product quality
 - Positive engagement
 - Ecofriendly products

9. Conclusion and Discussion of Results:

In conclusion, an analysis was done as shown in the previous section's figures. Where the study divided the result into three categories which will be discussed as follows:

- Customer service employees:

The results showed that in all three organizations (Hospitality (Hotels), Food Service (Restaurants) and Car service shops) that customer service employees agreed on the importance and the need to implement sustainable quality management practices not only for the customer but also for the employees benefit and general satisfaction. The more sustainable quality management practices implemented, the more the customer is satisfied as applied in Saudi organizations. Additionally, the feedback received that training and development followed by product quality management are the most important aspects that are proven to be effective along with the rest of survey results.

- Data analysts:

This survey was directed to the most important figure of the organization, the one who sees the change and plans ahead accordingly. Almost all of them gave feedback that implementing sustainable quality management practiced have somewhat influenced customer's satisfaction and became a more repetitive customer for the organization. The majority of them emphasized on the need for transparency in operation and that customers feel more connected when they know the operations and how things are being done, which results in increasing customer satisfaction. This is in addition to the other factors that contribute to implementing sustainable quality management approaches to reach customer satisfaction.

- Customers:

The most important part of the study are the customers and their feedback on the system and organization practices. A total of 60 participants visiting the different organizations have showed a good trend in result. The trend was that they agreed on implementing sustainable measure in any organization can lead to their satisfaction and can lead to increasing number of visits and interaction. They see that the most important aspect of implementing sustainable quality practices in the engagement on stakeholders, that is due to the connection they feel with this organization and they will not look for alternatives if they feel connected. Additionally, other factors also contribute to their satisfaction, such as a properly trained and developed employee and implementing a rewarding system which can reflect on the good service provided.

To summarize, the survey results for all participants show that implementing sustainable quality management practices can actually give the organization or firm an advantage. This result is matching the previous studies that were done in different countries with different input variables, however, the alignment shows that these practices have an actual effect.

10. Research Recommendations:

This research has highlighted the need for any organization to develop a sustainable quality management approach in order for them to develop and compete in the local and international market. The study outcome has revealed the positive impact of implementing some of the sustainable quality management practices. Thus, it is beneficial for an organization to invest and enhance these practices, such as energy efficiency, employee training and engagement, customer feedback integration, continuous improvement programs which will effectively enhance customer loyalty and enhance overall organizational benefits.

Future research should focus on expanding sample diversity by including a wider range of service industries and geographical locations within Saudi Arabia to enhance the generalizability of findings, in addition to looking for quantitative analysis and a wider range of qualitative analysis giving an integration of findings and a more variety of data collection to analyze from. Additionally, conducting a comparative analysis of different sustainable practices across sectors could identify best practices that increase customer satisfaction.

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