Customer Feedback Management Across Support Service Units in the University of the Cordilleras

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ABSTRACT

Feedback from customers are essential inputs for an organization's improvement specially when managed effectively, may it be in industries, businesses, or educational institutions. This study aimed to describe the procedure on managing customer feedback implemented by the various support service units in the University of the Cordilleras.

The researcher utilized a qualitative research design. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview conducted online with twenty (20) office personnel selected through purposive sampling. They were from the Student Welfare Services, Libraries, Career Development Center, Guidance and Counseling Office, Medical Clinic, Registrar's Office, Student Development and Welfare Office, Occupational Safety and Health, Center for Social Responsibility, Marketing Communications and Enrollment Services; and Accounting Office. The inductive thematic approach was used to analyze data which highlighted interesting themes identifying three (3) primary processes in managing customer feedback – 1) gathering feedback, 2) documentation and 3) addressing feedback. Feedback sources may include surveys, evaluations, and interviews via traditional or online methods.

Documentation entails collating and classifying feedback, which then leads to the identification of actionable items. The research findings suggest that customer feedback management extends beyond mere data collection and documentation; instead, it requires actions, actual measures and continuous improvement efforts that are monitored and sustainable.

KEYWORDS: Customer, Engagement, Feedback, Input Processing, Support System

INTRODUCTION

Every organization has stakeholders or customers with specific expectations and requirements to meet. Academic institutions are not immune from those obligations having the students, parents and guardians as major stakeholders among others. Eiriksdottir (2012) state that customer focus is the most important quality principle since quality management aims to satisfy the customer's needs. In order to understand the customer's needs and wants with the goal of meeting their expectations, organizations have to find ways to capture and manage customer feedbacks through a customer feedback system. Eiriksdottir described this process as a "formal mechanism for soliciting ideas for improvement and innovation from customers", "a mechanism for acquiring, analyzing and utilizing customer driven input to the organizational learning process", and an "absolutely essential element of determining if good customer value is being created and delivered". Also, according to Thijs (2008), knowing the needs and expectations of the customers, and meeting these, does not only lead to more satisfied customers, but, very importantly, results in a more efficient and effective provision of public services. It helps by concentrating on the most important elements of the service delivery and in managing the expectations towards the services provided. Seeing these elements is clearly essential in streamlining the processes and in translating them to the customers. It is important to place the management in a wider perspective of customer-oriented service delivery. Getting an insight into expectations and needs and afterwards finding out how we cope with these are used for direct improvement of the service and service delivery. This improvement of service and service delivery is one aspect of the overall management and improvement of the organization. Previous researches have proposed various important outcomes of customer feedback management, such as: assistance in performance assessment, facilitation of organizational learning (Babbar and Koufteros, 2008), improvement of overall service quality (Wirtz et al., 2010), and generation of competitive advantage (Lusch et al., 2007). Basing from their propositions, it can be implied that a good customer feedback management is indeed a major contributor for quality improvements. Thus, this study was undertaken to outline how the University's support service units effectively manage feedback from stakeholders exploring their strategies for optimizing the value of customer feedback across its processes. Moreover, there are a lot of studies emphasizing customer-focused services in the different industries but not much on managing customers inputs in academic institutions. The literature states that customer focus is considered vital, but the main problem with customer feedback is not to gather data, but to put it in use (Eiriksdottir, 2012). This study elaborates the practices for obtaining, analyzing and addressing customer feedback applicable in educational organizations. This objective is supported in another study by Manyaga (2008) as cited by Dhawan (2022) that for institutions to sustain and survive, stakeholders' views and recommendations should be heard and considered while taking important decisions for educational institutions.

Digging into more details, customer is defined as a person or organization that could or does receive a product or a service that is intended for or required by this person or organization. A customer can be internal or external to the organization (ISO 9000:2015). The same standard also defined feedback, being related to customer satisfaction, as opinions, and expressions of interest in a product, a service, or a complaints-handling process. Relatively, it defined customer satisfaction as the customer's perception of the degree to which the customer's expectation have been fulfilled. Also, customer service was defined as an interaction of the organization with the customer throughout the life cycle of a product or a service. Deriving from the given definitions, it can be defined that customer feedback are opinions, and expressions of interest in a product or a service from a person or organization that could or does receive a product or a service. It can be a basis to identify customers' needs and meet their expectations implying quality in service. For institutions to sustain and survive, stakeholders' satisfaction is the key. Their views and recommendations should be heard and considered while taking important decisions for educational institutions (Manyaga, 2008).

Quality in service related to customer feedback is further discussed in a study conducted by Begum (2011). Begum's research affirms that it is essential to maintain quality in service provided as it has direct relations with customer retention and satisfaction. He asserted that use of surveys to get feedback from customers is a systematic way of collecting information. However, Begum looked at qualitative data received from customer feedback as very challenging to analyze, as it is difficult to measure the meaning of such responses. This confirms the challenge in customer feedback management – unattended or unaddressed comments and suggestions, particularly those that require immediate or appropriate action. Hence, in this study, the researcher also focused on the practices and procedure being applied by UC's different support service units in addressing identified actionable items from customer feedbacks. This is also in consonance with the ISO 9001:2015 standard on customer satisfaction. The standard states that the organization shall monitor customers' perceptions of the degree to which their needs and expectations have been fulfilled. The organization shall determine the methods for obtaining, monitoring and reviewing this information (ISO 9001:2015 QMS). Considering that the University holds an ISO 9001:2015 certification, it suggests that it has implemented the mentioned mechanisms or techniques, or has developed initiatives and alternative methods. Hence, this study aims to discover and describe these practices that are likely integrated into the operations and services of the University support service units, potentially serving as benchmarks or models on customer feedback management for other educational institutions. As given emphasis by Faed and Forbes (2010), having customer feedback management system in the company may give better service to our current and potential customers and gather our lost customers. Moreover, it can strengthen the process of customer retention and the company can simply regain management.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research approach was used to examine how the University's support service units manage customer feedback, focusing on their processes and strategies. Qualitative methods were selected to provide detailed explanations of the subject allowing the researcher to deeply understand and appreciate the breadth of the topic.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews making it possible to have balance between structure and flexibility. The interviews were conducted online using the Zoom conference platform, providing benefits in terms of convenience and accessibility. This online method also facilitated the recording of interviews, ensuring more precise transcription of data.

Twenty (20) office personnel were chosen using purposive sampling to ensure they could provide the required information about customer feedback management. Specifically, individuals from support service units who directly interact with stakeholders were selected, allowing representation from various units. Chosen support service units, included the Integrated School Student Welfare Services (IS-SWS), Libraries, Career Development Center (CDC), Guidance and Counseling Office (GCO), Medical Clinic, Registrar's Office, Student Development and Welfare Office (SDWO), Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), Center for Social Responsibility (CSR), Marketing Communications and Enrollment Services (MCES), and the Accounting Office. This allows us to gain insights from a variety of involved units across the University.

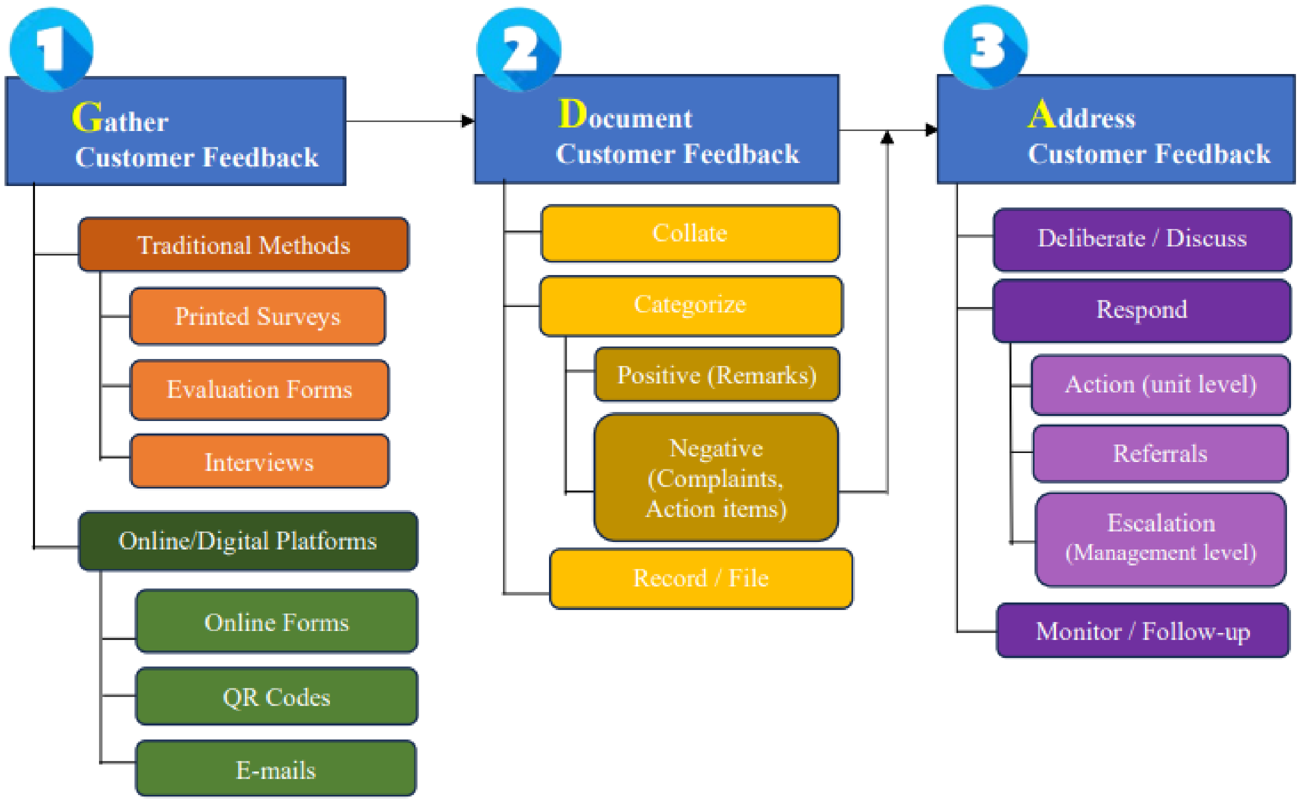
To analyze the data, an inductive thematic approach was employed, allowing codes to emerge naturally from the data. In vivo and descriptive coding techniques were applied, involving the consideration of direct quotes from participant responses. This approach entails recognizing and identifying patterns, themes, and key ideas within the data. This method allows for a structured and in-depth analysis of responses given by participants, which helps the researcher to identify similarities, differences, and main themes on how customer feedback is managed within the University's support service units.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the obtained data from this study describing the procedure for managing customer feedback. Through an in-depth analysis of the data collected, the researcher was able to describe the

processes and derive a model for customer feedback management. The findings also highlighted issues and insights from participants.
The diagram illustrates the newly devised GDA (Gather, Document, Address) model, a 3-point model for customer feedback management depicting essential processes and elements.

Figure 1: The GDA (Gather, Document, Address) Model for Customer Feedback Management



1. Insight Acquisition: Gathering Customer Feedback

The findings revealed the diverse practices of the service support units in gathering customer feedback. According to Stoica and Özyirmidokuz (2015), collecting and analyzing customer feedback is important because it allows organizations to learn in a continuous manner to adapt their offerings to customer preferences. Increasingly, customers use multiple communication channels to provide feedback. Their claim is supported by Eiriksdottir (2012) when he asserted that in order to optimize customer feedback process, it has to be built from multiple data sources, chosen by taking into account suitability and objectives with the process. Some units employed the traditional methods considering paper-based instruments, commonly known as printed survey forms; while other units opted to go digital and explore the opportunities that technology offers through the use of online forms taking advantage of the capabilities of the World Wide Web. There are also units that utilizes both as claimed by Key informant 3, "We have 2 modes of gathering customer feedback. First is the printed form, the traditional way of gathering customer feedback. Second, we have the online platform or online forms" and Key informant 15, "With regards to customer feedback, we have online and paper survey." In a similar study, Fabijan et al (2015) discovered that initial source of customer feedback originates from direct interaction with the customer by using techniques based on active customer involvement. Typically, feedback is collected using techniques such as customer interviews, customer questionnaires and customer surveys. In addition, customer feedback mechanisms include surveys (one-to-one, telephone, online), customer forums, and social media (Gupta, 2018). This suggests that units employ different methods and channels to reach wider audience and optimize the customer feedback process.

Moreover, some participants mentioned timeframes in gathering feedback. There are units that gather feedback annually as supported by Key Informant 2 that, "We are doing customer feedback annually, usually every after school year."

Some participants also mentioned that it is commonly conducted at the end of every term. Others referred to shorter time intervals: daily, weekly, or per transaction (whenever service is availed). This is similar with the findings of Gupta et al (2017). Accordingly, the available approaches for customer feedback gathering and evaluation focus on after usage feedback and how to improve product to satisfy customer based on after usage feedback. Today's customer feedback is mainly collected after-usage e.g. by interviews or online survey. It is also interesting that there were mentions from the interviews about random instances whereby feedback is sought as per customer's preference or availability. This means that feedback collection practices of the units could vary depending on the type of transaction or service rendered. Moreover, a few participants' responses suggested to set schedules as well as specific events or occasions that necessitate seeking feedback. According to Key Informant 2, "We also conduct feedback every after event or activity and every after session conducted". In general, the aforementioned practices underline how important it is to have flexible and adaptable feedback gathering approaches depending on the timeliness and nature of transactions.

1.1. Traditional Feedback Collection Methods

1.1.1 Printed Survey Instruments

Most of the interviewed units use printed surveys as their tool in gathering feedbacks which implies that these are also well-known tools for customers to air their feedbacks and suggestions. A widely used method is the distribution of customer satisfaction surveys in printed form. The use of printed surveys as tool in gathering feedbacks, particularly the customer satisfaction surveys is supported in a study conducted by Shah and Rai (2022). They asserted that a customer satisfaction survey or questionnaire collects data to identify behaviors that lead to happy or unhappy customers. The managing level of a business can ensure a way of knowing what the customer thinks about their service and what needs to be changed to gain positive customer satisfaction through customer satisfaction and loyalty surveys. In addition, organizations may be more familiar with quantitative methods such as surveys (Thijs, 2008). However, Thijs also presented certain limitation of this surveys. He gave emphasis that survey questionnaires are a widely used tool and whilst they allow for relatively simple administration of some form of feedback, they often fail to address the issues of concern, or support the development of a real understanding of the diversity of experience. Thijs also added that survey questionnaires rely on the ability to articulate or write responses to questions in the way that they are presented within the survey. This could also be the main consideration reason why units administered surveys that typically include a section for comments or suggestions, allowing customers to provide detailed feedback or insights. As noted by Eiriksdottir (2012), when collecting data from customers, there will not only be quantitative data but also qualitative data. Verbal comments about the product or the company should be used as supporting documents to quantitative analysis. These comments can give the organization a good idea about where the customer is heading in the future.

Furthermore, the satisfaction surveys are administered either per unit or centrally managed. Aside from the surveys done per unit, the Student Affairs Services (SAS) office conducts student satisfaction surveys that encompasses a wide range of support services. According to Thijs (2008), the most common approach is the use of general satisfaction surveys. General surveys are useful to get a broad picture of the views of service users on a range of issues. However, it is worth note taking how Thijs discussed the challenge in the conduct of general surveys. According to his research, the measurement of satisfaction brings a number of conceptual and practical difficulties. Satisfaction surveys are often done largely to meet perceived regulatory expectations. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that the data is not useful, the focus may be less on ensuring surveys provide practical, useful local information than on meeting requirements. Often surveys are an attempt to assess general satisfaction, to measure change over time and to build an up-to-date profile of the client base. It will not usually be necessary to conduct a major annual survey of all users unless there has been a substantial change to key aspects of service delivery. Thijs ideas are supported by Key informant 16, "It's also good if we have a survey that specifically covers services of our own unit so that there will be a significant triangulation of feedback results coming from the general surveys." This suggests that in addition to the general survey being conducted by SAS, it could be beneficial to conduct unit-specific surveys. These surveys would allow units to directly address concerns particular to their services and operations.

Nevertheless, the participants also highlighted some challenges linked to the use of paper-based surveys for gathering customer feedback. One notable issue is the time-consuming nature of distributing and collecting printed surveys manually. This scenario frequently occurs when there is a large influx of customers, many of whom are in a rush to complete their transactions and may not be inclined to participate in a survey. As Key informant 12 shared, "Our customers are always on the go, they are always in a hurry, so they don't answer the survey since they do not have enough time." This was also mentioned in the study of Fabijan et al (2015) where they discussed on questionnaires and surveys with customers being time-consuming techniques, and therefore challenging to make happen in a fast-moving business environment in which process efficiency is key. Seemingly, a solution for this issue could be adopted from Williams et al (2017). They suggest to have a consistent set of questions to enable long-term performance monitoring or benchmarking whilst retaining flexibility for asking a smaller number of questions relevant to current operational and strategic needs at the time. For the participants who encountered these challenges, they are considering simplifying the survey process with the aid of technology. As Key informant 9 suggests, "If we can also have Kiosks to facilitate automated surveys to cater walk-in clients during face-to-face transactions." Another suggestion from the participants involves the potential use of devices like tablets equipped with software featuring smileys or emoticons. These devices could be strategically located in the counters or within the university premises allowing customers to select between happy or sad faces to express their satisfaction and provide additional comments if desired. Their ideas are corroborated by Mourtzis (2018) when he concluded that the aim of provision of ICT tools and the digitalization of the procedure is to increase the response rate and the customer's satisfaction.

1.1.2 Evaluation/Assessment Forms

Other support service units also identified evaluation forms as a tool for gathering feedback. The forms are usually distributed to customers after they availed the services or to activity participants every after activities as affirmed by Key informant 18, "Basically, we use the evaluation forms. The evaluation forms are used after the activity or project implementation." Accordingly, these evaluation forms enable customers to assess the activity or the service provided based on the evaluation criteria and also share their experiences and insights that could serve as opportunities for improvement. Similarly, feedback from assessment forms provided following the activities help the units in determining the relevance and impact of the activity, enabling organizers to improve the content and delivery of upcoming events. This is validated by Key informant 17, "The positive comments, we utilize it for validation of impact of the activity or service. For the negative comments, mostly we use it to improve our next activity".

Moreover, some evaluation tool focuses on the performance of the staff or employee. Consequently, feedback gathered solely involves employee-related issues. According to Key informant 20, "We are being evaluated individually by our clients, not our service as whole." This is a favorable factor, as corroborated by Opoku and Naem (2004). They recommend that companies develop a customer feedback collection strategy with clearly stated objectives, for example assessment of employees' performance.

On the other hand, the participants conveyed that the use of evaluation forms also come with challenges such as low response rates and data analysis, where they exert more effort to make the evaluation form easier to understand and create an atmosphere that encourages active participation. In addition, they also identified the need for efficient data processing and analysis for the purpose of determining actionable insights from the acquired feedback.

1.1.3 In-Person Interviews and Dialogues

Units who do not have yet established customer feedback gathering tool such as the customer surveys collects feedback through interviews or conversations with customers. This in-person approach involves directly talking or interacting to their customers, particularly not to directly assess or rate their services but to gain insights on their overall experience and ideas related to the activity or availed service. However, participants admitted that these interactions are actually informal conversations often entails random interviews. According to Key informant 1, "We make random interviews to students. More on the general types of questions, but at least we should start formalizing it." This implies that gathered feedback may consist of random data without clear objectives. Consequently, these units are considering crafting and utilizing a formal feedback collection mechanism to supplement the data gathered from random interviews. As emphasized by Mourtzis et al (2018), formalized and structured process to gather feedback including customers' opinions and analysis of the feedback for product or service is needed for the design of today's products and services. In addition, internal data such as customer complaints should be used to clarify the issues to be addressed in depth interviews and focus groups (Eiriksdottir, 2012).

1.2. Online and Digital Platforms

1.2.1 Online Forms (MS Outlook, Google)

If there was anything good that came out of the previous pandemic, it was the advent of online platforms. One of the widely popular tools used for the collection of customer feedback across different units identified in this study is the use of online forms. Apart from the general online student satisfaction survey form administered by the Student Affairs Services, majority of the interviewed units are using online forms, either the MS Outlook forms or the Google forms for their surveys. According to Key informant 19, "For the online platform, we use the Outlook email to send the e-form." In addition, Key informant 11 shared, "We also use online surveys, they are linked to Google Forms." It became an efficient method of collecting feedback as the responses are captured automatically and stored electronically. According to Mourtzis et al (2018), modern approaches, exploit web-based questionnaire solutions, most commonly Google Forms, which provide a user-friendly interface that can be easily sent to or accessed online from customers all around the world. The automatically generated analytics of responses is also a bonus which enticed the units to convert their surveys online aside from these online forms are also easy to customize. However, Thijs (2008) also explained that online customer feedback forms can be used to gather feedback from service users, but to use this data appropriately, a rigorous administrative system is needed to ensure that multiple online responses by the same person are detected and that online responses and paper-based responses are not double counted. This implies that units, particularly those administering surveys in both printed and online formats, may consider having a system of monitoring and collating feedback to filter redundant responses to optimize effectiveness of feedback process and obtain quality results.

The participants also affirmed that the online forms are much convenient in terms of distribution and reaching a wide audience and facilitates an easier feedback collection. Nevertheless, potential limitations such as accessibility for customers without internet access and technical proficiency cannot be denied. This is confirmed by similar findings of Thijs (2008) that fatigue leads to low response rates to paper-based satisfaction surveys and other data gathering techniques is unlikely to be countered by attempts to gather data online. Some service users, particularly those with little experience of using computers, may feel that responding to an online questionnaire is too difficult or time consuming or may be concerned about data protection and confidentiality. Some people may simply have a preference not to use ICT at all. This suggests that customers knowledge and preferences must be taken into account when deciding whether to use printed or online formats in conducting customer feedback surveys.

1.2.2 Quick Response (QR) Codes Integration

According to Mourtzis et al (2018), mobile applications are more and more adopted by companies aiming to provide user-friendly and easy to use tools to their customers and retrieve valuable feedback for the provided products and services. These opinions can be used as guide for improving available products and product-services. It is important to develop technology to support interactions with real customers and to quickly capture their opinion on the available product-service in order to extract requirements of a market and also to improve products and services provided into a market. To make easier for each customer to identify the acquired product and to avoid any mistakes, a QR code scan feature has been introduced in the mobile application. Support service units acknowledge the use of Quick Response (QR) codes to access online customer satisfaction survey forms as a modern and smart way in which feedback is being collected. QR codes are bridging tools forming the link between physical and digital platforms by permitting the customers to quickly and effortlessly access online surveys using their mobile phones. With this technology, one does not need to manually type URLs and navigate pages. This simplifies the feedback process, eliminating the barriers that hindered more engagement from the customers. Key informants 11 and 12 unanimously asserted, “We use QR codes posted inside and outside the office.” Accordingly, it made it easier for their clients to access the online forms wherever they need. In addition to that, QR codes make it possible for them to obtain immediate feedback during the process, which promotes immediate response and action. On the other hand, although QR codes entail many benefits, their effectiveness relies on factors like customers’ access to the internet or knowledge in using such technology. Key informant 6 clearly articulated this challenge, “I will do away from QR codes since not everybody has WIFI access and even mobile data signal is weak in most of the areas.” This implies that units using QR codes also has the needed infrastructure, particularly internet connectivity, which is may not be the case for all units.

1.2.3 Emails as a Gateway to Online Forms

Several units mentioned utilizing emails as a primary channel for soliciting feedback from customers. This method allows units to reach a wide audience and facilitate feedback collection remotely. Such practice can be corroborated by the study conducted by Opoku and Naeem (2004) where their subject asserted that the company uses Internet, particularly email, to make contact and work with customers directly and entails that questions on feedback are answered the same day when possible. Opoku and Naeem also added that email is a good tool because it helps to record all the feedback sent by customers which may be very difficult if not impossible to do with the telephone. They further discussed that emails help to answer similar question with ease as staff can easily refer to an answer given to a similar query which consequently helps to save time also.

Something in common to the support service units' strategy with emails is the use of linked online feedback forms embedded within emails. This makes feedback collection more effective and convenient. Units include clickable links or buttons within email messages (i.e. "Click here to rate our service") directing recipients to online survey platforms or feedback forms hosted on websites. According to Key informant 10, "We also utilize Microsoft Forms and it's embedded in our email. So whenever we send or respond to an email or whenever we send a correspondence, the form is also automatically forwarded." Key informant 4 has the same practice, "To track the customer feedback, usually we have the survey questionnaire. It is in our email. It is embedded in the email through a link. So once we give information, it is already stated there that they are to evaluate our services by clicking the link." A similar response came from Key informant 16, "In our office email signature, the Client Satisfaction Survey is already incorporated, wherein in every transaction or every email, especially in inquiries, clients can easily access it right away to provide us with feedback. There is a portion in the email that says 'please click here' for the survey." This seamless integration streamlines the feedback submission process for customers, eliminating the need for manual data entry. However, the same with other methods, as per sharing of the interviewed personnel, there are also issues and challenges encountered. These include issues on email deliverability and low open rates. As an alternative, units choose to conduct surveys both in printed and online formats.

2. Documentation: Capturing Customer Feedback

The interviews conducted in this study provided insights in the documentation process in gathering feedback which involves systematically summarizing, categorizing and recording customer inputs to derive actionable insights and inform decision-making.

2.1 Collating and Synthesizing Feedback

Based on the responses, several key aspects emerge regarding the documentation of feedback and how data was collated and summarized by the support service units in the University. Units apply a systematic approach in recording feedback received from customers. This involves capturing feedback from established paper-based surveys or online platforms on a regular basis. According to Key informant 6, "To track the customer feedback, we encode them for tracking.". Also, added by Key informant 10, "We summarize everything, especially, we categorize them." In addition, Key informant 19 conveyed that, "Feedback are periodically recorded, usually every end of the term. There is an assigned staff to record feedback received from customers." Typically, data are compiled every end of the term. However, due to the demand of immediately addressing concerns arising from daily transactions, feedback is collated on a daily basis. Some units have dedicated staffs assigned to do the task of collating and summarizing the gathered feedback using a standard template designed by the unit. The utilization of MS Excel software further enhances the efficiency in organizing and summarizing the feedback. In addition, part of documentation involves recording the date when the feedback is received, from whom (i.e. from students, parents, guardians, faculty, non-teaching staff) and the verbatim comments or suggestions form the customers. This is a similar approach presented in the case study of Opoku and Naeem (2004). They cited that there is a log book where all emails are entered. This includes date, the details of the sender, the type of questions (whether open ended or close), and the type of problem or issue raised. This is done by a schedule officer who has been appointed to handle all emails. Accordingly, emails are logged and registered so that they can easily trace customers who are not truly satisfied.

Moreover, once collated, feedback data is synthesized and analyzed to extract meaningful insights and identify trends or recurring issues which are further processed by categorization. Commonly, actionable items are compiled separately.

2.2 Insightful Sorting: Categorizing Customer Feedback

Bryman (2004), Green et al (2007) and Becker (2012) are amongst authors that have written about qualitative data analysis and they all agree that coding and categorizing are important steps in analyzing qualitative data. Begum (2011) added that it is essential to capture the customer feedback comprehensively. If the categorization process is deficient and does not capture all requirements, then the overall process will be ineffective. This can be seconded by Stoica and Özyirmidokuz (2015). They assert that after collecting data correctly, data must be analyzed without loss of information in order to ensure an effective complaint management system.

Feedback from UC customers vary. The responses indicated that majority of units classify or categorize the feedback they receive. One of the participants, key informant 17 discussed, “We collate not just the numerical but also the comments. We categorize into 2, positive or negative. We cluster similar responses or comments. Also, we separate the negative comments to be highlighted.” This is similar with the inputs of Thijs (2008) suggesting that to clarify and expand the value of these kinds of feedback systems it may be more accurate and helpful to consider three broad categories: 1. comments: suggestions and ideas about services and service delivery; requests for information; 2. compliments: comments expressing appreciation or acknowledging that something has been done well; and 3. complaints: comments expressing dissatisfaction or informing that something has gone wrong and needs to be put right. Alkire (2014) in a related study also presented customer feedback as of positive or negative valence or it can also be valence-free taking the form of suggestions and comments. Alkire contend that 5 types of customer feedback (5Cs) can be identified: (i) positive Compliments; (ii) negative Complaints; (iii) valence free Comments (e.g., a customer outlining how they use a product); (iv) Concerns (when the customer outlines an issue that is not a complaint, but has the potential to become a problem if not addressed) and (v) Counsel (suggestions and constructive critical reviews). While, Faed and Forbes (2010) assert that companies are dealing with massive customer feedbacks on daily bases which could be positive, negative or neutral. They must utilize all sort of feedback in order to increase and improve their own perceptions. Consequently, units typically identify feedback as either positive feedback: remarks like praises, commendations, affirmations; or negative feedback which may entail actionable items, suggestions for improvement, or even complaints.

2.2.1 Positive Feedback (Remarks)

A system that also welcomes and records “compliments” can be highly valuable. It is linked to the idea of being appreciative and finding what is working and why, as well as what is not. Compliments and acknowledgements of efforts can have a positive impact on staff morale and performance so it is important to consider how these comments can be fed back to staff (Thijs, 2008). Thus, in the process of classifying the feedback received, units also identify the positive feedbacks. The researcher adheres to Kraft and Martin's (2001) categorization where positive feedback is defined as a compliment taking the form of an acknowledgment or an expression of gratitude. According to participants, such type of feedbacks boosts the unit's confidence that they are actually providing excellent service to their customers. Positive feedback often manifests as expressions of satisfaction even from simple gestures like a heartfelt, "Thank you".

In addition, the participants also affirmed that positive insights from customers showcases the unit's areas of strength which suggests continuity of their existing practices to sustain excellent customer service. Strengths or areas of excellence highlighted in positive feedback includes timely response and delivery of service; helpful, courteous and friendly staff; and quality service. This enables units to recognize and reinforce practices and behaviors that contribute to their customer's positive experience.

Nevertheless, suggestions also came out from the interviewed personnel that positive feedback can be basis for recognizing and rewarding employees who contribute to exceptional customer service. They suggest that units identify individuals or teams mentioned in positive feedback and acknowledge their efforts through formal recognition programs, awards or commendations. This recognition not only celebrates individual achievements but also reinforces a customer-centered culture across the unit and in the University as a whole.

2.2.2 Negative Feedback (Complaints, Actionable Items)

It is inevitable that collected feedback may include negative responses or insights. This holds true in the UC experience, especially in the support service units. In the case of these units, customers express dissatisfaction through negative feedbacks. Some of the feedbacks are service-related issues. Delays, errors, inconsistencies and lack of responsiveness are common in this category. This implies shortcomings or deficiencies in the delivery of the unit's services. Additionally, communication problems were also identified by the different units as source of negative customer insights. This category includes instances where customers feel misunderstood or ignored by office staff, lack of clarity in instructions or information, and unresponsiveness to queries or delays in responding especially when queries are sent via email. Support service units also encounter process related issues like customers having difficulty following bureaucratic procedures and completing transactions, or accessing services, and long waiting times and cues that really frustrates customers resulting to negative feedback. Whereas, customer service implies procedures and actions that make it easier for customers to accomplish their transactions and businesses with a company in a secure environment (Spencer-Matthews, 2006). Moreover, as per UC experience, staff behavior and attitude also contribute to the following category within the negative classification. Customers perceive some staff members as rude or unapproachable.

The categories of negative feedback outlined above represent actionable items or suggestions for improvement that units are expected to address, typically within the unit's level. However, in some serious cases, categorized as complaints, the units may need to escalate the matter to higher management for resolution. There is a growing recognition that negative customer feedback can be regarded as a strategic tool in companies (Faed and Forbes, 2010).

2.3 Records Keeping

According to Thijs (2008), appropriate recording enables analysis of the number of complaints and other types of comments and also enables trends or patterns to be monitored. Analysis of outcomes will also be

valuable. Once such systems are in place, organizations should be able to gain useful intelligence about particular experiences of service delivery – either service failure or success – which may have wider implications for service design or contain valuable insights into the user experience.
Based on the insights shared by the participants during the interviews, it is evident that record keeping is also a very important step in customer feedback management process. According to Key informant 4, "All the feedback and complaints are documented as well as the actions taken. They are filed in folders. At the end of the term, we collate them and check whether the status of action item is closed or not." This practice facilitates the analysis, tracking, and effective resolution of customer concerns. Most units were able to establish records of captured customer feedback systematically. A standardized format or filing was created to ensure consistency and completeness in data captured resulting to easy access and retrieval, and maintained reliability of recorded feedback. Units keep records of the feedback as basis for monitoring and follow-up to track the status of the issues and how they are being addressed. Moreover, the units use the records as valuable point of reference when encountering similar issues.

3. Addressing Concerns: Feedback Response

Survey results analysis may provide managers with insight into customer opinions. Shah and Rai (2022) affirm that results of a customer satisfaction survey can help management establish action plans to address flaws. This section discusses how the support service units respond to feedback requiring action and items that needs to be addressed particularly feedback that presents opportunities for growth and improvement of service delivery.

3.1 Deliberation and Discussion

One of the underlined practices that came out in the findings of this study is the common approach among different units – the discussions regarding customer feedbacks and complaints during office staff meetings. According to Key informant 18, "Every time we have a meeting, we discuss what are the feedback of our partners. It's stated in our minutes of the meeting." This implies that the units are dedicated to customer care, also suggesting that they believe in collective responsibility shared by all office staff and that addressing feedback is not solely the duty of one individual who received them but rather a team effort. Aside from staff meetings, the conduct of focus group discussions was also mentioned. Discussions allowed the units to analyze, prioritize and formulate appropriate responses and action plans. According to Begum (2011), focus group discussions are done in order to understand the needs of the customer through meetings of small groups of customers to discuss product or service requirements.
Moreover, some authors also gave emphasis on conducting root cause analysis as part of discussions and deliberations. Units should also identify root causes and assess the potential for reduction or elimination of their occurrence. Root cause analysis refers to the process of identifying these causal factors or in other words, finding the real reason for why problems occur (Eiriksdottir, 2012). Root cause analysis techniques can be both informal and structured. Common techniques, that are simple to use in most situations, are cause and effect diagram (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2010) and asking „why" five times (McCarty, et al., 2005). In addition, as asserted by the participants, most of the concerns are being addressed within the unit's level. This gives an implication that the units have indeed an effective feedback response mechanism. It also gives emphasis on the effectiveness of collaborative methods in addressing customer concerns.
As a result of discussions and deliberations, units are able to assess the validity and severity of the issues raised by the customers and make an informed decision on whether the issues are to be addressed within

the unit, to be referred to other units or reported and escalated to higher level management. If managers do not find the analysis useful and actionable, all previous data generation and analysis is unnecessary (Eiriksdottir, 2012).

3.2. Respond

Customer feedback management does not stop in the gathering and recording of data. Most importantly, customer feedbacks, particularly those actionable inputs or complaints must be addressed. According to Eiriksdottir (2012), compared with other types of customer feedback, the problems with complaints are not concerned with collecting the data but rather in how it is managed and used within the organization. In a study using both qualitative and quantitative data, Caemmerer and Wilson (2010) stressed the extent to which different customer feedback mechanisms contribute to organizational learning. Their study indicates that the models and methods developed to gather and manage customer feedback must not only consider the way data is gathered but also the way the data is used and implemented at a business unit.

For units to address issues, participants highlighted action planning and implementation as important stages in customer feedback management. They came up with various approaches. Prioritization of action items was given emphasis. The units identify and categorize action items as either minor or major concerns based on urgency, impact or effect to the unit's services and operations, and how feasible they are to implement. Items or issues that may create risk or have essential effect will be given the top priority. Nevertheless, units also ensure that minor concerns are also responded and not overlooked. Units exert best efforts to address them promptly as they arise. The commitment of support service units to respond to customer feedback is clearly illustrated in their responses, whether resolving issues internally, referring them to other units, or escalating them to higher-level management when necessary.

3.2.1 Action (Unit Level)

Effective complaint handling according to Eiriksdottir (2012) has two major benefits: the analysis of complaints and problems will increase the chance of "doing it right the first time" and if the individual problem is resolved to the consumer's satisfaction, loyalty will increase. Units asserted that most of the concerns or issues from customer feedback are addressed within their level since majority of the action items identified were business-as-usual in nature. According to Key informant 9, "I would evaluate if there is a need to elevate or not. If I can address it within my level, I will address it. But if it is beyond my control or authority, I will elevate that." Feedback received by staff members are reported to the unit's head for resolution as Key informant 2 explained that, "It's an unwritten rule, it's a established internal protocol that we report feedbacks to the boss" and backed up with a statement from Key informant 5, "If we cannot handle it in staff level, we escalate them to our supervisor and mostly it is already being addressed within the supervisor level so there is no need to escalate the issue to higher management." The head of office then discusses the matter to the concerned staff, and collaboratively plan and implement appropriate action. This holds true to all of the support service units which implies a culture of accountability and empowered units through autonomy over decision-making. Furthermore, considering that most of the feedback concerns their services and operations, units take full responsibility to take immediate action and address issues to prevent worst scenarios. They acknowledge the fact that being the process owners, they must quickly respond to the needs of their customers without undue delays. Nonetheless, the unit managers still report to their immediate supervisors. In the case of support service units, this may involve the executive council (academic director, vice presidents, president) for information purposes.

3.2.2 Referrals

In some cases, customer feedback may be received or forwarded to the wrong units, or coordinating and collaborating with other offices may be required to address the concern effectively. Here's a discussion focusing on how the support service units handle feedback through referrals. According to Key informant 16, their services are often mistaken or identified with that of the services of other unit, hence they have been receiving feedback that are out of bounds. In some cases, customers express their concerns regarding the services of other units to the wrong office. In such cases, receiving units endorses the concern to the appropriate office or department. If feedback is received via email, it is forwarded and redirected to the relevant unit. This is very common in the experience of one unit as expressed by Key informant 14 where they receive thousands of emails, mostly are inquiries, and complaints included. With a handful of received feedbacks, the unit also identified challenges associated with referrals. Despite their best efforts, some feedback may be unintentionally forwarded to the wrong offices resulting delays or even halt in the process. Additionally, due to time constraints and limit in manpower, they may not have the opportunity to follow up the concern once it has been forwarded making it difficult to monitor and potentially leaving some issues unaddressed. To resolve this, Eiriksdottir (2012) suggests doing screening. Screening is the sorting of complaints from the general communication flow and the directing of those complaints to the one who is in charge. Eiriksdottir (2012) states that transferring of complaints between units, should be done in as few steps as possible to minimize the risk of lost information. When a complaint has reached the complaint handling office all necessary information should be logged in a database to describe the status and data elements of each complaint. This suggests that units may come up with a common database to monitor feedback, particularly referrals.

3.2.3 Escalation (Management Level)

Despite the units' efforts to address issues internally, there are instances where escalating concerns, particularly complaints, to the top-level management becomes necessary. Participants conveyed that this often occurs when customers prefer to directly speak with the VPs or even with the president.

Accordingly, the units have unwritten but established internal protocols for reporting feedback, often following set of institutional procedure - Administrative services units reports to the Vice President for Administrative and Student Services; Academic units reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research; units under the basic education reports directly to the Integrated School Academic Director; while some offices are directly under the University President. While not formally documented, these protocols serve as guidelines for ensuring that concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities or supervisors as necessary. This may involve submitting incident reports or formal complaints. By reporting feedback to the top management, units ensure that critical issues are brought to the attention of decision-makers for resolution. Units also document and keep records of feedback reports endorsed to and acknowledged by appropriate authorities. The documentation promotes transparency, accountability and facilitates follow-up on reported feedback, contributing to effective customer feedback management.

3.3 Monitoring of Progress and Follow-up

Customers' issues and complaints often require more than a single action to be fully addressed and resolved. Also, some may require a longer period of time to be addressed since improvement initiatives often undergo phases to be completed. That being said, support service units practice monitoring of actions taken to address customer feedback or complaints in their feedback management. Units implements mechanisms for tracking feedbacks and monitoring their resolution status to ensure closure. According to

Key informant 14, "We monitor everything and we keep a record of those. We also make sure that we give feedback to customers." In the monitoring process, units track progress of the action taken against specific timelines or targets identified during the action planning. They maintain customer feedback logs, monitoring sheets or shared databases. Units conduct regular reviews to assess progress in a form of meetings or progress reports where the team discuss the status of ongoing initiatives, identify challenges and make necessary adjustments. Units document the progress and take notes of the status when the concern is already resolved. Monitoring extends beyond the completion of actions; it also involves verifying the effectiveness of actions taken through follow ups. Units also ensure the closure or resolution of the feedback by verifying that it has been adequately addressed by having a follow up with customers to confirm satisfaction, seeking feedback on the effectiveness of implemented actions or solutions and finally closing the issue. These findings are corroborated by previous research. Homburg & Fürst (2007) conducted a study that shows that not only is it important to solve complaints successfully, but also to give customers the impression that their complaints stimulate improvement and learning processes within the company. This can, for example, be achieved through systematic feedback to complainants sometime after their complaint has been resolved, thereby informing about improvements. Williams et al (2017) has the same stand. They look at feeding back to customers having a dual purpose of acknowledging their contribution whilst providing opportunity for the organization to feedback a short summary of the changes made as a result of customer feedback being received. While, Shah and Rai (2022) also claimed that efforts of updating customers may help to limit the spread of discontent to a broader audience.

In summary, the findings reveal an approach on customer feedback management that encompasses feedback collection, documentation and resolutions of issues. While the units' processes and strategies vary, there are also similarities. All units demonstrate a clear commitment to ensure that customer feedback is acknowledged and addressed. It is also evident from the shared practices that continual improvement is integral to their system by optimizing customer inputs.

CONCLUSION

Customer feedback management is a multi-faceted process. The GDA (Gather, Document, Address) model derived from the practices and insights shared by support service units is a clear illustration of their customer feedback management process involving various methods and strategies. From the gathering of customer feedback utilizing both printed formats and online platforms, to the analysis and categorization of documented insights, and finally taking measures to address and resolve customer concerns, the support service units demonstrate a comprehensive system. However, while the GDA model represents a synthesis of best practices, it cannot be claimed that it is completely implemented in each support service unit. Therefore, this study proposes for the establishment of a standardized procedure based on the GDA model, which can be institutionally adopted and applied to all units.

Furthermore, given that this study has a broad scope on describing customer feedback management, future researches could delve deeper into the specific area of complaints handling. Particularly, there is a need for studies that outlines effective management of complaints within the organizational context of the University.

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