

**ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE THROUGH PROMPT SERVICE
DELIVERY: THE CASE OF THE FOREST SERVICES DIVISION IN THE
NORTHERN REGION**

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the CEMBA and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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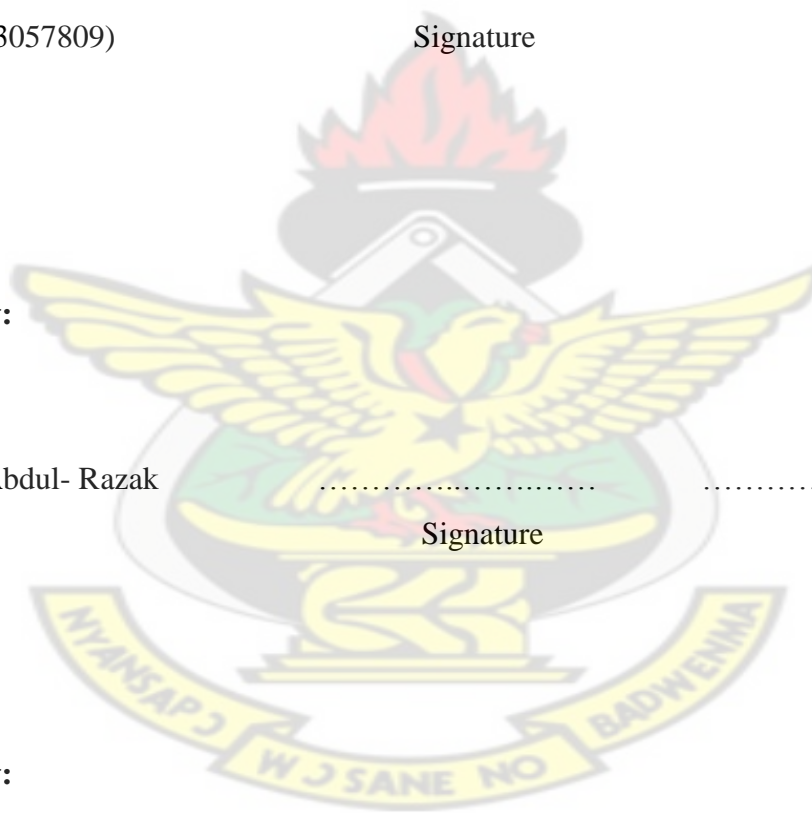
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Interdependence is a higher value than independence. Indeed this work is a synergistic product of many minds. I am grateful for the inspirations I received from serving colleague Foresters who want to bequeath the next generation, a transformed institution than they have come to meet, where all levels of management must recognise that quality begins and ends with the customer.

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ABSTRACT

The on-going Ghana Forestry Commission institutional drive to ensure staff step up the practice of good customer service for its numerous clientele was studied. The customer service delivery in Northern Region of the Forest Services Division of the Ghana Forestry Commission was evaluated. The study was carried out in the Northern Region of Ghana and the specific objectives the Researcher investigated were to: determine the waiting time of customers for service delivery, assess the factors that contribute to delayed service inclusive of the effects such delays have on the clientele and evaluate the perception of the customers on the general delivery of service of the forestry institution. For three (3) months, one hundred structured questionnaires were administered to respondents by simple random sampling and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held for the management staff of the Forestry Commission in the Northern Region. The results indicate that 19% of the respondents were dissatisfied and 30% hold a bad perception about the services they currently access while 70% think otherwise. Poor staff performance rating and a prolonged length of time for service delivery were revealed by the investigation. Securing permits to harvest trees for charcoal production, the purchase of seeds and tree seedlings, payment of fees for squatting at the fringes of the twenty four (24) forest reserves, provision of technical advice and royalty payments are the most sought after services in the Northern Region. Loss of customers and revenue, threats from some loyal customers to switch, battered reputation, trauma and disappointments were some of the customer worries impacted by the delayed access to service from the Forestry Commission. Finally, the respondents' thoughts on areas that require improvements have been espoused. It behoves the Forestry Commission to address these gaps to secure a satisfied clientele base.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A strong customer service is a valuable asset, especially in today's high-tech-oriented, increasingly impersonal business world. Therefore, if you are aware of common customer service mistakes and avoid them, you may strengthen your position in the competitive market (www.icsa.com). Businesses are built on the relationships established with one's customers. Today's customers are seeking, even expecting, on-line experiences that are interactive, social and seem personalized just for them (www.ecustomerserviceworld.com).

Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. No enterprise succeeds without attracting, building and keeping loyal customers i.e. *people with whom we exchange value*. Likewise, no organisation or enterprise can make a good living (which is customer satisfaction) without meeting the needs of its customers. That is what people do in organizations: they serve others and they succeed through service (Timm, 2008; Scott, 2002).

Customer service is an organisation's ability to supply their customers' wants and needs and excellent customer service is an organisation's ability to constantly and consistently exceed the customer's expectations (<http://sbinfocanada.about.com>).

It is against this backdrop that this research is conducted to evaluate customer service in the Forest Services Division of the Ghana Forestry Commission in the Northern Region.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

It is undoubtedly established by most scholars that the customer is the main essence of the businesses run by owners. Thus, the goods and services produced must serve as want satisfying needs to consumers. The physical looks of a good as well as the quality of a good or service and the use derivatives may not be the only factors that account for the customer satisfaction.

Related to the customer satisfaction requirements is the promptness with which a customer need is met by the producer or supplier. The want of this promptness is a bane or the failure of several businesses to attract and retain customers. It is for this reason that this research is conducted to evaluate customer satisfaction enhancement in the Forest Services Division of the Ghana Forestry Commission in the Northern Region so as to view the Ghana Forestry Commission as a deliverer of first class quality service to its numerous clientele.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were sought in the study:

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to assess the effects of prompt delivery of service on customer service enhancement.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

To realise the general objective, the following specific objectives were sought:

1. To determine the waiting time of customers in service delivery at the Regional and District offices in the Northern Region.
2. To assess the factors that contributes to the delay of customers in accessing services at the Regional and District offices.
3. To determine the effect(s) of delayed services on customers.
4. To evaluate the perception of customers on the general delivery of forestry services.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following constitute the Research Questions for this study:

1. What is the waiting time of customers for service delivery at the Regional and District offices of the Forest Services Division (FSD) in the Northern Region?
2. What factors contribute to the delay of customers in accessing the services of the FSD in the Northern Region?
3. What are the effects of delayed services on customers of the FSD in the Northern Region?
4. What are the perceptions of customers on general service delivery of the FSD in the Northern Region?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Northern region of Ghana which is the study site has 70,384 km² area and 2,468,557 human populations (PHC, 2010). It comprised of five (5) forestry offices and twenty (20) political districts. The customers of the FSD studied were Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Farmers, Timber contractors/harvesters, Non- Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) gatherers, Charcoal producers, Sand and Stone winners, Squatters, Chiefs / Landowners, Youth groups, Assemblymen etc.

The research work lasted for 5 months (January, 2011 to May, 2011). This included questionnaire design and pre- testing, questionnaire administration, editing, data analysis and thesis write-up.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Forestry Commission is a service providing institution with many varied stakeholders whose needs ought to be satisfied. Consequently, the study shall among others, assist the Forestry Commission in its policy formulation drives, feed into the Commission's on-going institutional reform as well as serve as an addition to the body of knowledge that researchers have accumulated in the past. Furthermore, it will serve as the basis for future research work that shall bridge the current knowledge gap about customer service. Improved customer service that the findings of the study would reveal and the subsequent recommendations made would enable customer base enhancement and thereby increasing the market share of the service.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This thesis is organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter one gives the general introduction which includes background of the study, research problem, justification of the study, scope of the study and organization of the study.

To put the reader in context with what earlier work has been written by other distinguished authorities on this subject, literature is reviewed in the second chapter. Chapter three presents the research methodology and the profile of the Forestry Commission under study, while chapter four presents the results in the form of data analysis, findings and discussions. The fifth chapter consists of the key findings, summary, conclusions and recommendations that were established.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the schools of thoughts of various scholars that relate to the research conducted.

Every organisation talks about giving great service. Likewise, people in all kinds of professions acknowledge the importance of serving their customers, clients, patients, shareholders, passengers, employees and other stakeholders. Despite these good intentions, everyday experience quickly shows that receiving great service is an unusual, not commonplace experience. We have all encountered shabby customer service or witnessed what can best be described as a service fiasco. Much of that poor service can be attributed to poor attitudes among individuals and organizations. Far too often, customers receive poor value and are forced to wrestle with ineffective processes, or encounter people that make them want to do business elsewhere. One can change much of that. One can help companies and success- oriented people translate good service intentions into a workable plan with sustainable activities that do, in fact, serve customers and bring organisational and career success. True winners in today's economy do more than just talk about great service – they find ways to consistently deliver it (Timm, 2008).

Customer service skill development provides the most significant arena for career success. Whether you work for a huge corporation or you run a lemonade stand, the principles of customer service remain the same. You live and die by what your customers think of you. Service to internal customers (i.e. employees) can be equally important as service to external

customers. One's prime task, regardless of your job title, organisational position, experience, or seniority, will always be to attract, satisfy, and preserve loyal customers. A loyal customer is a company's most valuable asset. Without customers, no organisation can exist for very long (Solomon *et al*, 2006). No business or organisation can succeed without building customer satisfaction and loyalty. Likewise, no person can make a good living without meeting the needs of his or her customers. You can have every product that your customers could possibly want, but if you do not treat your customers well, you can kiss your business goodbye. Numerous studies have shown that it costs more to acquire new customers than it takes to retain existing ones (www.isa.com). Customer researchers say that it costs about five to six times as much to attract a new customer (mostly through advertising and promotion costs) as it costs to keep an existing one (where costs may include giving refunds, offering samples, replacing merchandise etc). One report put these figures at about \$19 to keep a customer happy versus \$119 to get a new buyer into the store (Timm, 2008; Peter and Donnelly, 1995). Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. You can offer promotions and slash prices to bring in as many new customers as you want, but unless you can get some of those customers to come back, your business will not be profitable for long.

Timm (2008) opines that good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy – happy enough to pass positive feedback about your business along to others, who may then try the product or service you offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers- inferring that a good customer service is all that is required for customer loyalty and hence customer retention.

2.2 THE CUSTOMER

A customer is someone who has direct relationship with, or is directly affected by an agency and receives or relies on one or more of that agency's services or products. Customers in human services are commonly referred to as service users, consumers or clients. They can be individuals or groups (Fornell et al, 1991).

To Timm (2008), the common perception is that a customer is someone who buys something from you. He added that the broad definition of a “customer” is anyone with whom we exchange value and that as human beings we are constantly exchanging value(s) with each other.

Anyone who works for a living has a customer. So regardless of the nature of your work, you have a customer. Lawyers call their customers clients, doctors call theirs patients, authors have readers and actors call them the audience. The Police officer may call his, a suspect or complainant/witness or both. It does not matter what we call them, we must understand that customers are the most important aspects of any business because they can single-handedly determine the longevity and vitality of any business (<http://ghanaconscious.ghanathink.org/node>).

Businesses are built on the relationships one has with one's customers, including relationships now often established on-line. Today's customers are seeking, even expecting, on-line experiences that are interactive, social, and seem personalized just for them (www.ecustomerserviceworld.com).

A good customer service adds value! There's no way around it. No shortcuts. (<http://ghanaconscious.ghanathink.org/blogs/gap/2008/01>). Note that if the customer feels

bad about how he or she has been treated, she will tell her friends about it. Or even worse, drop a note in a user-group or other forum that is heavily trafficked. Before you know it, you're out of business! Similarly, if one delivers legendary customer support or service, this same mechanism could work really well for one. In the meantime, you are converting ordinary customers into lifetime customers, just by delivering extraordinary service (www.customerservicepoint.com). The customer has the money and businesses are to provide services or offer their products of sale so that they can have a share of the customers' money. The customers decide whether you and your business will survive and how much money you can make. The question is this: Why does the Ghanaian business community pay so little attention and respect to this group of people which has so much power? (<http://ghanaconscious.ghanathink.org/node>).

Customers are always right. If you do not listen to them you would be forced to go into extinction. Customers will gladly pay more for less when they have the confidence that they will be served well. It should be emphasized here that Ghanaian businesses need customers far more than the customers need them and great service is a sound marketing tool (<http://ghanaconscious.ghanathink.org/node>).

According to Kotler (2009), great customer- service is about: figuring out what your customers want, getting it for them accurately, politely and enthusiastically with a smile, going extra mile and say 'thank you' and be courteous, listening to the needs of the customer, reliability of the products, basic service and service design, recovery of the product, surprising customers, fair play to all, teamwork or networking, employee research and

development and servant leadership. The above thoughts by the scholar go to buttress the point that the customer is the central figure on which the business revolves.

2.3 TYPES OF SERVICE

The Dictionary of Marketing Terms (1988) puts 'service', as a term, used to describe activity performed by sellers and others which accompany the sale of a product, and aid in its exchange or its utilization (e.g. shoe fitting, financing etc). Such services are either pro-sale or post-sale and supplement the product but do not comprise it. If performed during sale, they are considered to be intangible parts of the products. This definition includes services such as wrapping and delivery because services exist in connection with the sale of a product or another service.

According to Farese *et al*, (1991), services are intangible products i.e. cannot be physically touched. Services are intangible, perishable, inseparable from the provider, and highly variable each time it is delivered. Physical products can be inspected and tried before buying but pure service are intangible (Kumar and Menakshi, 2007). To Kotler (2009), a service is any act of performance that one party can offer another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything; its production may or may not be tied to physical product. He added that the distinctive characteristics of services are intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability.

Shycon (1992) asserts that a recent study found that the quality of a company's service can cause it to gain or lose as much as 10 percent in sales revenue. The writer concluded that services which accompany products, can affect sales in two ways:

- a. directly, by enhancing the reliability of product availability
- b. and indirectly, by increasing a buyer's preference for and loyalty to a supplier that provides reliable service with fewer problems

According to Peter and Donnelly (1995), unlike products where quality is often measured against accepted standards, service quality is measured against performance. Consequently, Kumar and Menakshi (2007) opine that a service provider has to carefully audit his resources and competencies, and then conduct market research to locate the segment which it can best serve. Because most customers are very clear about the quality of the service they want, they walk in a premise expecting that level of service: they get disappointed if their expectations are not met, because such expectations are very precise. Services are more intractable than products because they come in various shades and hues. The provider has to define very precisely and also design the appropriate service- product mix. Hence, the service provider ought to carefully perceive the wants of the customer and appropriately provide that.

Peter and Donnelly (1995) posit that the issue of service quality is one of paramount importance to all service providers. In a recent study, more than 40% of all customers surveyed listed poor service as the number one reason for switching to the competition, while only 8% listed price as a reason for switching. They noted that in general, problems in the determination of good service quality are attributable to differences in the expectations, perceptions, and experiences regarding the service encounter between the provider and user, and that Management of a company may not even realize that they are delivering poor quality service due to differences in the ways managers and customers view acceptable

quality levels. They concluded that to overcome this problem and to avoid losing customers, firms must be aware of service quality and its determinants.

Parasuraman *et al* (1991) notes that each of the determinants plays an important role in how customer views the service quality of a firm. They added that turning service quality into a powerful competitive weapon requires continuous striving for service superiority – consistently performing above the adequate service level and capitalising on opportunities for exceeding the desired service level. Also relentless efforts to continually improve service performance may well be rewarded by improvements in customer attitudes toward the firm: from customer frustration to customer preference to intense customer loyalty. What should be obvious is that in order to be successful, a service firm must have dedicated employees.

Great service is a sound marketing tool. Your customers would share the great service experience with their friends, neighbours and children - great service keeps customers coming back. The company's finances look good if it provides great service because great service is directly linked to the company's bottom-line. It makes for a better place to work. If a company provides great service it is almost guaranteed to produce a more enjoyable work place. It is amazing how the spirit of giving your customers a great service can be carried over into the way your employees relate to each other. It helps the company to attract better people to work with because creating a better working environment through offering great service makes it attractive to quality job applicants. It is easier to provide better service than trying to make things right to unhappy customers.

It takes more time, energy and money to fix things than simply have them taken care of up-front – note that acknowledging, apologizing and taking action to handle the customers'

complaints promptly are all very important parts of the customer service equation (<http://ghanaconscious.ghanathink.org/node>).

2.3.1 Causes of Poor Customer Service

Quality Customer Service is when our customers come back and our products do not. The general causes of unsuccessful service delivery (customer worries) are failure frequency, downtime, and out-of-pocket costs. According to Kotler (2009), these culminate into: gap between consumer expectation and management perception, gap between management perception and service-quality specifications, gap between service-quality specifications and service delivery, gap between service delivery and external communications and gap between perceived service and expected service

He concluded that some of the determinants of service quality include: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles. He intimated that some best strategies towards good Customer Service should include: Top-Management Commitment, High Standards, Self-Service Technologies, Monitoring Systems, Satisfying Customer Complaints, Satisfying Employees and Strategic Concept.

According to the *ghanaconscious.ghanathink*, the following constitute some causes of poor customer service in Ghana

- this subject is not taught in the formal institutions and in the business world;
- it is not respected by employers and co-workers to be customer service -oriented employee;

- one needs to go extra mile in cultivating customer service, unfortunately most employers and employees are lazy;
- great customer service requires different social skills like: humility, concern, empathy, thoughtfulness and ability to predict the needs of others - most people do not want to go through the trouble of acquiring all those skills they do not have;
- most people do not want to put their ego away and serve;
- employees are poorly treated. It is a well-known fact that employees will never treat their customers any better than their employers do. Customer service suffers when leadership forgets the need of its employees. Customer service only flourishes when employees have a degree of trust and respect for the management and the company;
- there is no reward system to reinforce great customer service;
- most companies fail to define what customer service is because they do not even know the needs of their customers let alone to provide the needed service;
- arrogance, which usually stems from delusion and the belief that one is indispensable.

2.3.2 The Importance/ Outcome of Good Customer Service: Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty and Retention

According to Singh (2006), organizations ought to look into the needs and wants of their customers to be successful. This assertion explains why many researchers and academicians have continuously emphasized on the importance of customer satisfaction loyalty and

retention i.e. good customer service. This is due to the fact that customer satisfaction is important because many researches have shown that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on an organisation's profitability. Hence, the consequences of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction must not be ignored in any study. He concluded that there is also a positive correlation between customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention i.e. very important factors for a service providing organization to be successful.

According to Kotler (2000), a good customer service often results in customer loyalty and hence customer satisfaction. He defines customer satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to his or her expectations. Gustafson (2005) defines Customer Satisfaction as a result of a cognitive and affective evaluation, where some comparison standard is compared to the actually perceived performance. If the perceived performance is less than expected, customers will be dissatisfied. On the other hand, if the perceived performance exceeds expectations, customers will be satisfied. This overall satisfaction has a strong positive effect on loyalty intentions across a wide range of product and service categories. What these writers brought to the fore is the fact that customer satisfaction is achieved through permanent relationship building.

To Hansemark and Albinsson (2004), satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some need, goal or desire. The heart of customer satisfaction is meeting or exceeding these expectations; at the highest level, it is achieving customer delight (Christopher *et al*, 1991).

According to Parasuraman *et al* (1991) the customer expects, competent and efficient services, basic courtesies, to be informed of options, to be listened to, knowledgeable help, friendliness, feedback, honesty and respect, professional service and above all dedicated attention. According to Kotler (1991), it (satisfaction) covers the entire ownership experience from selecting a product, to purchase, through aftercare to repeat purchase.

Oliver (1997) is of the view that a good customer service influences customer loyalty which is a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product or service consistently in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour. Thus a good customer service creates true customer loyalty when the customer becomes an advocate for the organisation, without any incentive. Hoyer and MacInni (2001), define customer retention as the practice of consistently working to satisfy customers with the intention of developing long-term relationships with them. Zineldin (2000) also defines customer retention as the commitment to continue to do business or exchange with a particular company on an on - going basis.

Hoyer and MacInnis (2001) are of the view that satisfaction can be associated with feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight. To Hokanson (1995), factors that affect customer satisfaction include friendly employees, courteous employees, knowledgeable employees, helpful employees, accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity among others.

Customer satisfaction is important because, according to La Barbera and Mazursky (1983), satisfaction influences re-purchase intentions whereas dissatisfaction has been seen as a primary reason for customer defection or discontinuation of purchase. However, Bowen and

Chen (2001) said that having satisfied customers is not enough, there has to be extremely satisfied customers. This is because customer satisfaction must lead to customer loyalty. To Bansal and Gupta (2001), building customer loyalty is not a choice any longer with businesses: it is the only way of building sustainable competitive advantage.

Evans and Berman (1997) opine that building loyalty with key customers has become a core marketing objective shared by key players in all industries and the strategic imperatives for building a loyal customer base are as follows: build closer ties with customers, anticipate customer needs and respond to them before the competition does, focus on key customers, proactively generate high level of customer satisfaction with every interaction and create a value perception. They added that satisfaction in itself will not translate into loyalty but satisfaction will foster loyalty to the extent that it is a pre-requisite for maintaining a favourable relative attitude and for recommending and re-purchasing. Once customers recommend a department store it fosters both re-patronage and loyalty towards that store. Thus, the key to generating loyalty is to get customers to recommend a store to others among others. Evans and Berman(1997) are of the impression that companies that satisfied customers have a good opportunity to convert them into loyal customers – who purchase from those firms over an extended period of time.

Finally, loyal customers cost less to serve, in part because they know the product and require less information. They even serve as part-time employees. Therefore loyal customers not only require less information themselves, they also serve as an information source for other customers. This is among the main reasons why enhancing customer service through prompt delivery may be a main concern for the Forestry Services Division of the Ghana Forestry Commission. This position by the Forestry Commission is consistent with Bansal and Gupta

(2001) who opine that building customer loyalty is not a choice any longer with businesses: it is the only way of building sustainable competitive advantage. It is important to understand the factors that impact on customer retention and the role this can play in formulating strategies and plans. Based on the views and work by the numerous researchers and academicians, it can be concluded that customer satisfaction, hence a good customer service is very important. Thus, though customer satisfaction does not guarantee re- purchase on the part of the customers, it still plays a very important role in ensuring customer loyalty and retention. Therefore organisations should always strive that their customers are very satisfied.

2.3.3 Factors that affect Customer Satisfaction and Profitability

Customer satisfaction does have a positive effect on an organisation's profitability. In order to achieve customer satisfaction, organisations must be able to satisfy their customers' needs and wants through good quality service (La Barbera and Mazursky, 1983).

According to Kotler (2000), customers' needs state the felt deprivation of a customer whereas customers' wants, refer to the form taken by human needs as they are shaped by culture and individual personality.

To Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), satisfied customers form the foundation of any successful business as customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth. Coldwell (2001) of "Growth Strategies International (GSI)" performed a statistical analysis of Customer Satisfaction data encompassing the findings of over 20,000 customer surveys conducted in 40 countries by Info Quest. The conclusions of the study were:

- A Totally Satisfied Customer contributes 2.6 times as much revenue to a company as a somewhat satisfied customer.
- A Totally Satisfied Customer contributes 17 times as much revenue as a somewhat dissatisfied customer.
- A Totally Dissatisfied Customer decreases revenue at a rate equal to 1.8 times what a totally satisfied customer contributes to a business.

Zairi (2000) intimates that there are numerous studies that have looked at the impact of customer satisfaction on repeat purchase, loyalty and retention. They all convey similar messages in that:

- satisfied customers are most likely to share their experiences with other people to the order of perhaps five or six people. Dissatisfied customers are more likely to tell another ten people of their unfortunate experience.
- Furthermore, it is important to realise that many customers will not complain and this will differ from one industry sector to another.
- lastly, if people believe that dealing with customer satisfaction/complaint is costly, they need to realise that it costs as much as 25% more to recruit new customers.

The above studies or assertions confirm that having a large clientele base reflect on an organisation's profitability for which reason, the Ghana Forestry Commission should remain committed or consistently strive to achieve.

2.3.4 Prompt Service Delivery and Customer Satisfaction

In order to achieve customer satisfaction, organisations must be able to satisfy their customers' needs and wants through prompt service delivery and hence, good quality service (La Barbera and Mazursky, 1983). Customers become endeared to a service provider or company due to many factors including the promptness with which employees receive and serve clients - mindful of the fact that customers increasingly generate more profits for a company by doing business with that same company for a long time (Kumar and Menakshi, 2007). Similarly, no business or organization can succeed without building customer satisfaction and loyalty. Likewise, no person can make a good living without meeting the needs of his or her customers. That is what people do in organisations: they serve others and succeed through this (Timm, 2008).

To Timm (2008), individual behaviours that impact customer service include greeting customers, breaking the ice by initiating conversation, complimenting, calling people or customers by name, establishing and maintaining eye contact when on the service providers' premises, asking for feedback, the frequency and quality of correspondence with customers, listening skillfully, assuring customers in their buying decisions, smiling, using good telephone techniques, using appropriate touching behaviours, enjoying people, and being positive about selling, celebrating customers successes, staying close to the customer(s) after the sales etc.

According to Kumar and Menakshi (2007), prompt service delivery and resulting customer satisfaction do not exist in a vacuum. Since the provision of a service involves a face-to-face human contact, it is important that the frontline employees have the time, the tools, the

training, the support, and the backing and encouragement not only to satisfy the customer then but to do it in a way that makes the customer come back again and again - customer loyalty. Poor frontline performance has huge adverse impact on customer satisfaction and probably nothing can assuage a customer who has been treated shabbily by a frontline staff. The work systems, policies, and procedures of the organisation should empower the frontline staff to do whatever is possible to please the customer; hence, top- management vision is important.

2.3.5 Performance Measures Reflecting Long-Term Profitability: Consequences of Customer Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

The consequences of not satisfying customers can be severe/ dire. According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), dissatisfied consumers can decide to:

- discontinue purchasing / patronise the good or service
- engage in negative word-of-mouth communication.
- complain to the company or to a third party and perhaps return the item

Some of the indices of performance measures include ; overall customer satisfaction, service quality, good value, competitive pricing, billing timeliness, accuracy of billing, knowledgeable employees, courteous employees, billing clarity, quick service, helpful employees, friendly employees, customer satisfaction/brand loyalty, product/service quality, brand/firm associations, relative cost, new product activity, manager/employee, capability and performance, current performance, long-term profits.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in the five (5) forestry districts offices of the Northern Region of Ghana – Bole, Damongo, Yendi, Walewale and Tamale (see Figure 3.1).

3.1.1 Location and Extent

The Northern Region is divided into 20 political districts. It is bounded on the North by Latitude $9^{\circ} 30'N$ and on the West by $1^{\circ} 00'W$. It has an area of 70,383 km² with a human population of 2,468,557 (PHC, 2010). More than 70% of the economically active population is into agriculture (Bogner, 2000).

3.1.2 Climate and Vegetation

The Northern region is located in the Guinean Savanna zone of Ghana. It is characterized by grasses and clusters of drought – resistant trees such as baobabs, *Acacias* etc (www.wikipedia.com). It experiences a five (5) month uni-modal rainfall pattern spanning May – September, with a mean annual rainfall between 750mm – 1050mm. The diurnal minimum and maximum temperatures are 14⁰C and 40⁰C respectively (Bogner, 2000).

3.2 SAMPLING METHOD

The probability sampling method was employed and specifically the simple random sampling was used to select the sampling elements from the 157 customers of the Forest Services Division.

Out of this 157 population a sample of 100 was selected and interviewed using 100 questionnaires. The analysis of the information derived from the sample is used in deciding for the target population.

The customers were blocked into interest groups according to the service they require within each population site or forest district i.e. Non- Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) gatherers, Farmers, Loggers, Non- Governmental Organisations, Charcoal Producers, Stand and Stone Winners, Squatters, Chiefs/ Landowners etc.

Questionnaire, a pro- forma that contains a sequence of questions to solicit/ elicit information from respondents was administered (See Appendix 1).

The questionnaire covered the following issues:

- Political district in which the respondent is resident
- Type of Stakeholder
- Age and Gender
- Knowledge of the services the FSD renders
- Assessment of the cause of the poor service delivery i.e. Language barrier, attitudes of forest staff etc
- Effect(s) of the delayed service on the respondent/ customer
- Perception of customers on general service delivery and
- Suggestion(s) for any improvements

3.2.1 Data Collection and Analysis

One hundred (100) structured questionnaires were administered by enumerators by random sampling method i.e. twenty (20) questionnaires per each forest district. The basis for the selection of this sampling technique was to give each member an equal and independent chance to be selected and interviewed. An interview guide was used to guide the participatory Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) at the staff management level (see Appendices IIa and IIb). The nine (9) management staff comprised the Regional Forestry Manager, Assistant Regional Forestry Manager, Regional Accountant, Human Resource Manager and five (5) District Forestry Managers drawn from all the five (5) forest districts in the Northern Region.

3.2.2 Sample Size and Sampling Intensity

The sample size in this methodology is the sum of the number of respondents from all the five sample sites where the customer experience is being measured, which is 100. The sample size, that is, 100 expressed as a percentage to the total 157 stakeholders, constituted the sampling intensity of the study i.e. 63.69%.

3.3 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The data analysis had both qualitative and quantitative features. Qualitative because it examined the behaviour of workers of the Forest Services Division to clientele and quantitative because it rated their efficiency as workers in terms of the services they render/deliver.

Descriptive statistics, tools in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) were used for the generation of the Tables, Bar graphs and the Pie Charts from the questionnaires. The data was edited before generated. The qualitative data obtained from the Focus Group Discussions were summarized into statements and employed in the comparison and clarification of some of the results from the questionnaire administered.

3.4 THE GHANA FORESTRY COMMISSION

The Forestry Commission is a state institution established by the Act of Parliament, 1999 (Act 571) to bring under it the main public bodies and agencies implementing the functions of protection, development, management and regulation of forests and wildlife resources and to provide for related matters. The Forestry Commission is divided into three divisions i.e. Forest Services Division, Wildlife Division and the Timber Development Division (Forestry Commission, 2003).

The Forest and Wildlife policy of 1994 called for an institutional reform of the then Forestry Department established in 1908 by the colonial government. Realising the important role forestry plays towards Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and also in the fulfillment of important social and ecological needs, government has supported this objective as an important part of a commitment to a wider programme of public sector reformation to deal with the serious institutional weaknesses. With this in mind, in 1995 firms of Management Consultants were engaged to look at institutional options and recommended changing the 'Department' into a 'Service' which would be outside the Civil Service and organized along corporate lines. The Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP) was consequently, launched in June 1996 to support the 'establishment of a Forest Service capable of effective and

efficient implementation of forest policy'. The outcome of this arrangement was the securing of external donor support from the Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom by the Forestry Commission to undertake a nationwide institutional restructure with the view to improving upon the delivery of quality service to its valued customers through the avoidance of duplication of services- an institutional weakness by the then Forestry Department and the Forest Products Inspection Bureau (FPIB), downsize its staff strength through retrenchment or redeployment, development of staff into effective Resource Managers and efficient service deliverers and the change of the designation of its Management staff from 'Conservators' status to 'Managers' to give them the independence of taking decisions and be held accountable, organized/ undertook series of training workshops (on *mindset, perception, culture and behaviour, effective communication* etc) by management consultants e.g. Messrs Deloitte and Touche, Ishmael Yanson and Associates etc for all its staff categories, sponsored eligible staff to acquire higher degree training in Forestry in Ghana and overseas, sponsored some high- level management staff (Chief Executive Officer and Directors of all functional areas) to the United Kingdom to participate in some best practices by similar Executive Officers and Directors, the creation of Customer Services Units and appointment of Customer Service Officers whose duties are to relieve the Regional and District Managers of non –core functions in order to reduce customers' waiting time, introduced the Service Charter in which are spelt out the Vision and Mission Statements of the Forestry Commission and apportioned time lines for all services the three divisions render to customers (Forestry Commission, 2003).

3.4.1 The Objectives and Functions of the Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission (FC) is mandated by law to regulate the utilization of forest and wildlife resources, the conservation and management of those resources and the co-ordination of policies related to them.

The FC has the following as its Vision Statement: *‘To leave for future generations and their communities with richer, better and more valuable forestry and wildlife endowments than we inherited’.*

The Mission Statement is *‘to sustainably develop and manage Ghana’s Forestry and Wildlife resources’* (Forestry Commission, 2003).

The newly crafted Vision and Mission statements of the new Ghana forestry Commission have captured the attributes that are necessary if it is to meet the needs of its clients and ensure the maintenance of Ghana’s forest estates through the provision of good and quality service (www.fcghana.org).

Without limiting the scope of the above, the Forestry Commission shall:

- a. regulate the utilization of forest and timber resources;
- b. manage the nation’s forest reserves and protected areas;
- c. assist the private sector and the other bodies with the implementation of forest and wildlife policies;
- d. undertake the development of forest plantations for the restoration of degraded forest reserves/ areas, the expansion of the country’s forest cover and the increase in the production of industrial timber ;
- e. undertake such other functions as are incidental to the foregoing, or as the Minister may direct, advising and providing technical services with regard to matters of

- resource protection, management and development of market intelligence pertaining to wildlife and forest industries;
- f. develop forest plantation and game ranches for the restoration of degraded forest areas and dwindling wildlife resources;
 - g. co- ordinate policies related to the conservation, management and development of forest and wildlife resources;
 - h. develop forest and wildlife resources outside reserves and other protected areas with local governments who are expected to have a major say in how land outside forest reserves and other protected areas are used;
 - i. provide District Assemblies with technical advice on tree nurseries, woodlot establishments, wildlife management, alternative natural resource-based livelihood strategies, commercial tree plantations and soil and water conservation and
 - j. provide specialised services to specific stakeholders and target groups by the various Divisions (Forestry Commission, 2003).

3.4.2 The Divisions of the Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is mandated to establish such divisions in the Commission as it considers necessary for the effective achievement of the object and functions of the Commission. Without limiting the scope and subject to the power of the Commission to re-organize the divisions as it considers appropriate, the following are established as Divisions of the Commission:

- a. The Forest Services Division
- b. The Wildlife Division
- c. The Timber Industry Development Division

Each of these divisions has a role by ensuring that the Vision and Mission of the Ghana Forestry Commission is realized (Forestry Commission, 2003).

KNUST



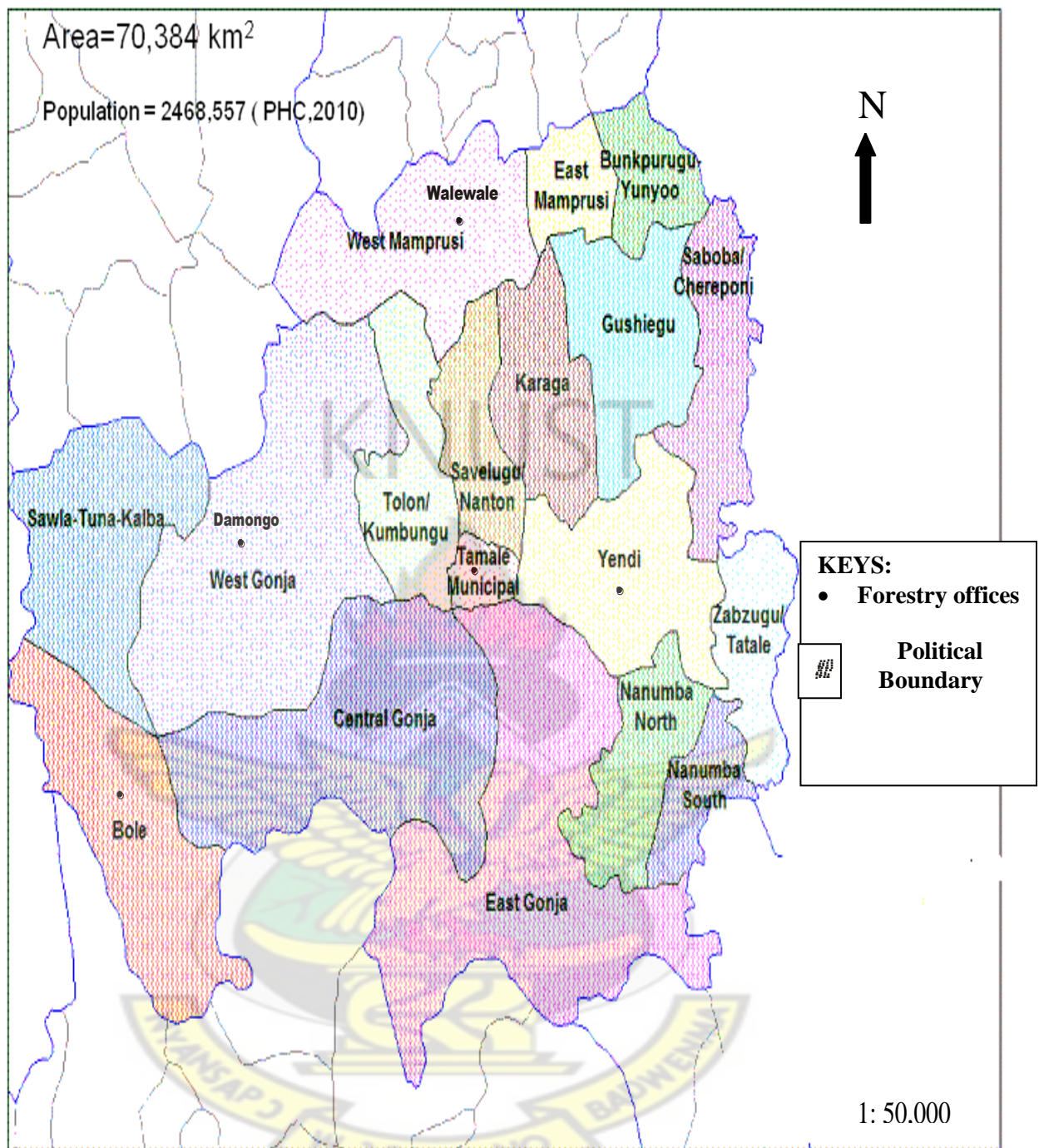


Figure 3.1 Map of Study Area

Source:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Ghana_districts.png

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the results from the administration and processing of the one hundred (100) structured questionnaires in the five (5) forest districts (i.e. Bole, Damongo, Yendi, Tamale and Walewale) in the study area (Northern Region).

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 present the percentage of respondents from each forest and political districts respectively. Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 respectively discuss the gender, age structure and type of stakeholders in relation to the occupational diversity in the 5 forest districts. Section 4.3 discusses the determination of waiting time of customers. Section 4.4 deals with some of factors that contribute to delayed services while Section 4.5 is about the effects/impacts of delayed services on the stakeholder/ customer. Section 4.6 is about the perception of customers of the Forestry Commission (FC) on general service delivery and Section 4.7 is on suggestions (optional) from respondents/ stakeholders on improvement measures to be adopted by the Forestry Commission.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

This section presents the results of respondents from each Forest Districts in the order illustrated below. The Tamale Forest District comprised of Tamale Metropolis, Savelugu-Nanton and Tolon- Kumbugu political districts (3), Damongo/Buipe Forest District comprised of Central and West Gonja political districts (2), Walewale Forest District comprised of West Mamprusi, East Mamprusi and Bunkpurugu- Yunyoo political districts

(3), Bole Forest District comprised of Bole- Bamboi and Sawla- Tuna- Kalba political districts (2) while the Yendi Forest District make up the remaining ten (10) political districts.

4.2.1 Forest Districts of Respondents

The number of respondents was proportionately higher in the Tamale (27%) than in the Walewale (21%), Damongo (19%), Yendi (17%) and Bole (16%) forest districts in that order. This is illustrated in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1. The study reveals that the customers of forestry products and services occur across all the five forest districts with the Tamale Forest District dominating in terms of the customers.

Table 4.1 Forest Districts of Respondents

Districts,	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Tamale	27	27.0	27.0
Damongo / Buipe	19	19.0	46.0
Walewale	21	21.0	67.0
Bole	16	16.0	83.0
Yendi	17	17.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011.

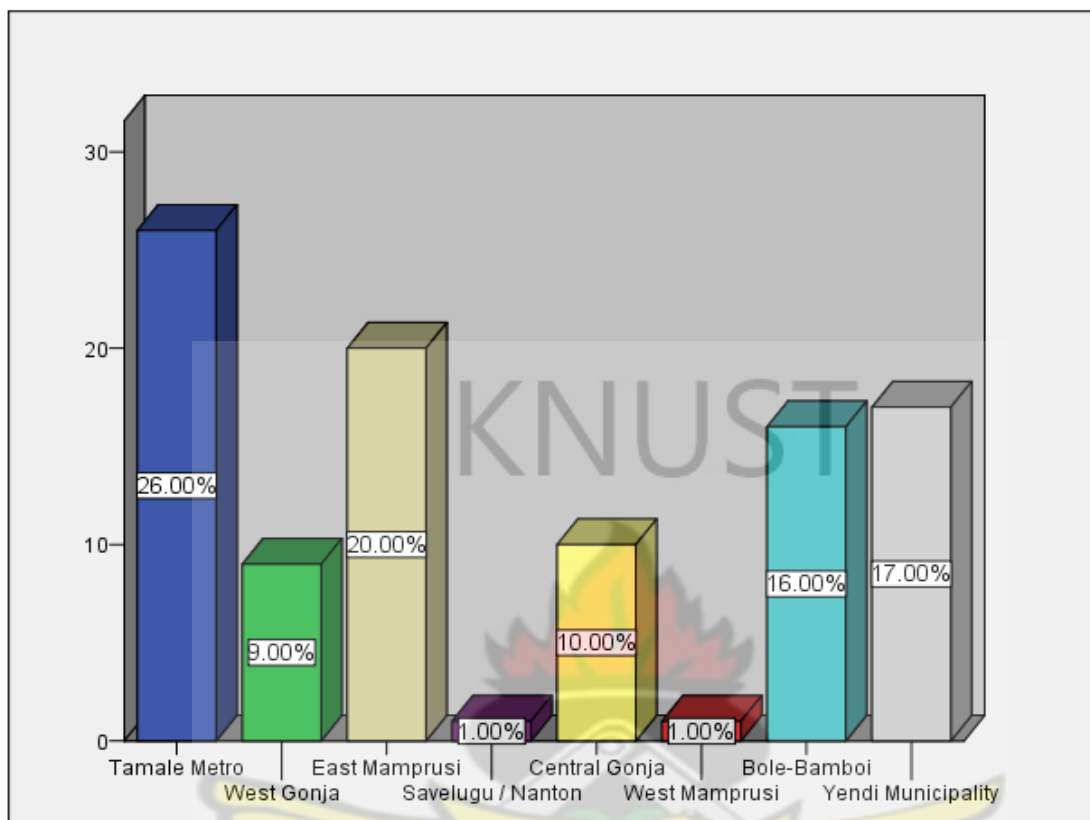


Fig 4.1 Political Districts of Respondents (%)

Source: Field Survey April, 2011.

4.2.2 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Out of the 100 stakeholders interviewed, 80% were males and 20% females – indicating that most services of the Forestry Commission in the Northern Region are accessed by mostly the Male population. This is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

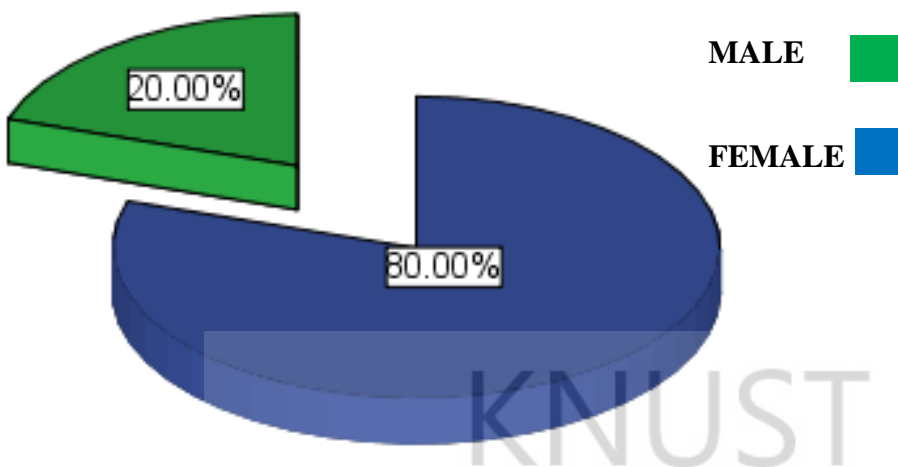


Fig 4.2 Gender distribution of Respondents (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011.

4.2.3 Age Distribution of Respondents

More than 80 % of stakeholders sampled were above 30 years old. Only 18% falls within 20- 29 age group. The adult age of the respondents in the forestry business suggests that they can be educated (through workshops, durbars, seminars etc) on sustainable management of the forest resources.. The 2,468,557 human populations in the Northern Region shall be assured of the continuous productive and service/ protective functions of the forests for a long time if they are receptive to sustainable exploitation. Figure 4.3 illustrates that.

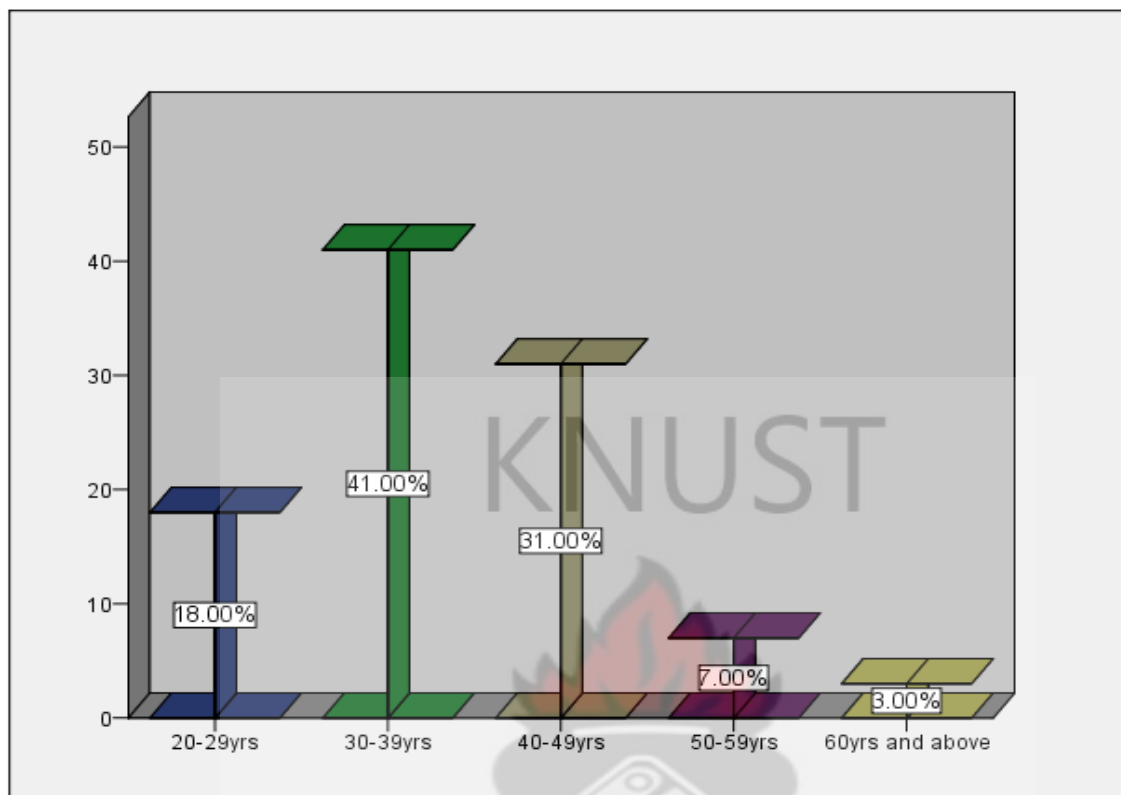


Fig 4.3 Age Distribution of Respondents (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011.

4.2.4 Type of Stakeholders

Fifty nine per cent (59%) of the respondents represent Individuals, 12% represents Youth Groups, 8% comprised Traditional Rulers, 6% each represents the District Assembly and other stakeholders while Institutions, Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Timber Contractors are 4% each and 1% respectively. This is illustrated in Figure 4.4. This means that a greater proportion of those who seek forestry services are individuals. This may pose a serious concern for co- ordination of their activities if they were mostly into groups.

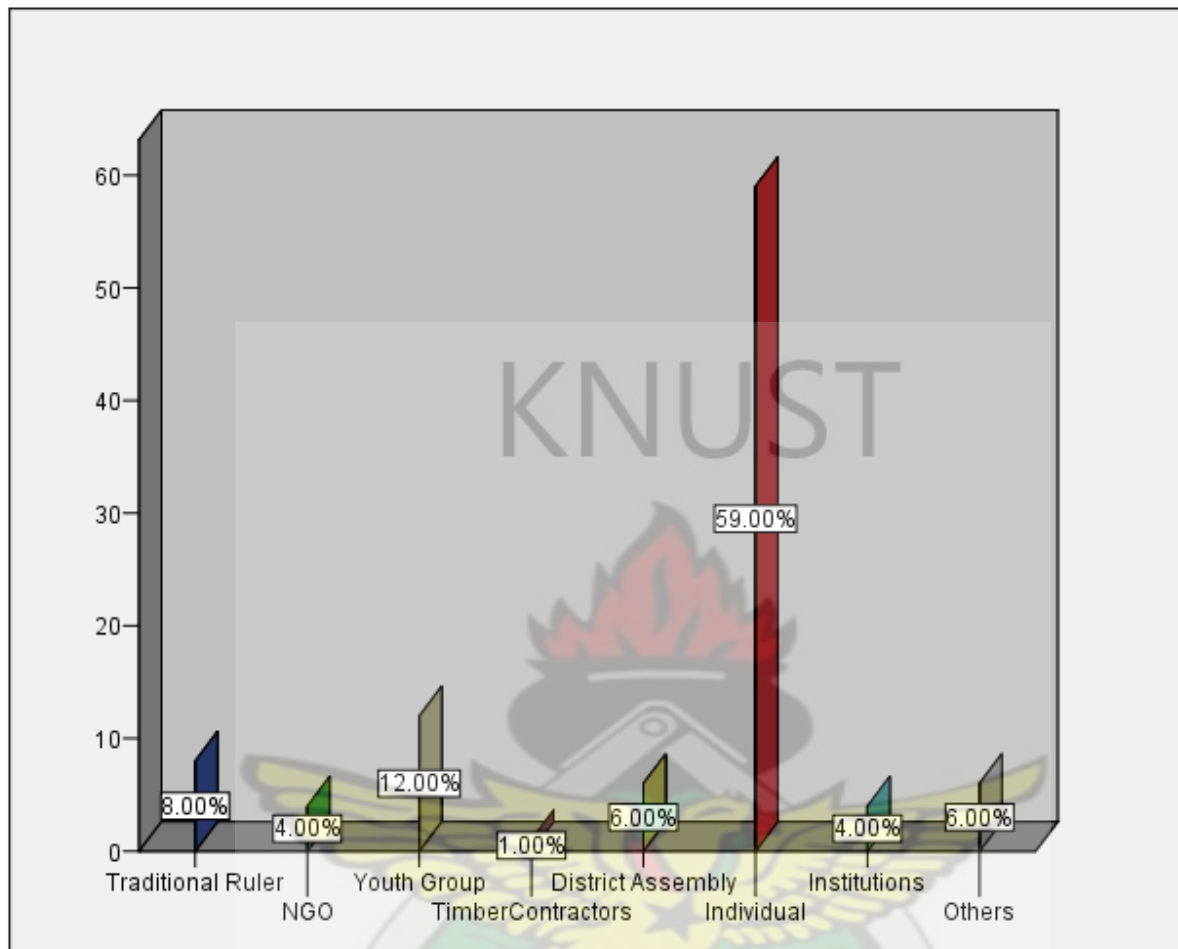


Fig 4.4 Type of Stakeholders (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.3 DETERMINATION OF WAITING TIME OF CUSTOMERS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

This section presents the results from the sample of respondents on the awareness and types of the services the forestry institution renders to the population in the Northern Region.

4.3.1 Awareness of Services of the Forest Services Division in Northern Region.

Out of the 100 respondents interviewed over 90% mentioned that they know the services performed by the Forestry Commission in the Northern Region. Only 8% of the respondents sampled claimed they had no knowledge (fig 4.5). This is an index that the services rendered by the Forest Services Division are well known in the Northern Region. Prescriptions towards regulation of resource harvests shall be adhered to and there would be fewer deviants in the exploitation of these forest resources. That is they being aware suggests that they would equally be aware of the regulations on the exploitation of forestry services.

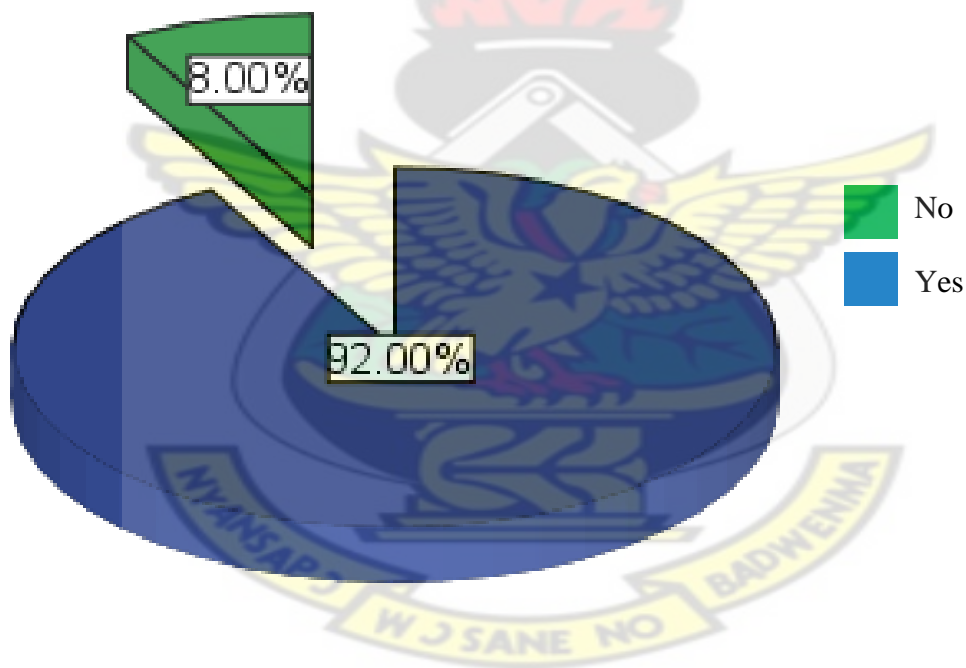


Fig 4.5 Awareness of the Services/ Functions of the FSD in Northern Region (%)

Source: Field survey, April, 2011

4.3.2 Types of Services Received from the Forest Services Division

The results indicate that securing permit to harvest wood for charcoal production is the most sought after service in the region (23%). Permits for NTFPs harvest, Sand winning, Property Mark renewal, Stone winning and the permit to harvest timber follow in that order as shown in Figure 4.6. It follows that charcoal burning is the major pre- occupation of many seeking forestry services in the region. To forestall abuse through over – exploitation that may lead to the erosion of the resource base, woodlots should be established to cater for this increased need. Other areas of the use of the forest would have to be explored especially as excessive burning of charcoal can deplete the forest and that may have dire consequences.

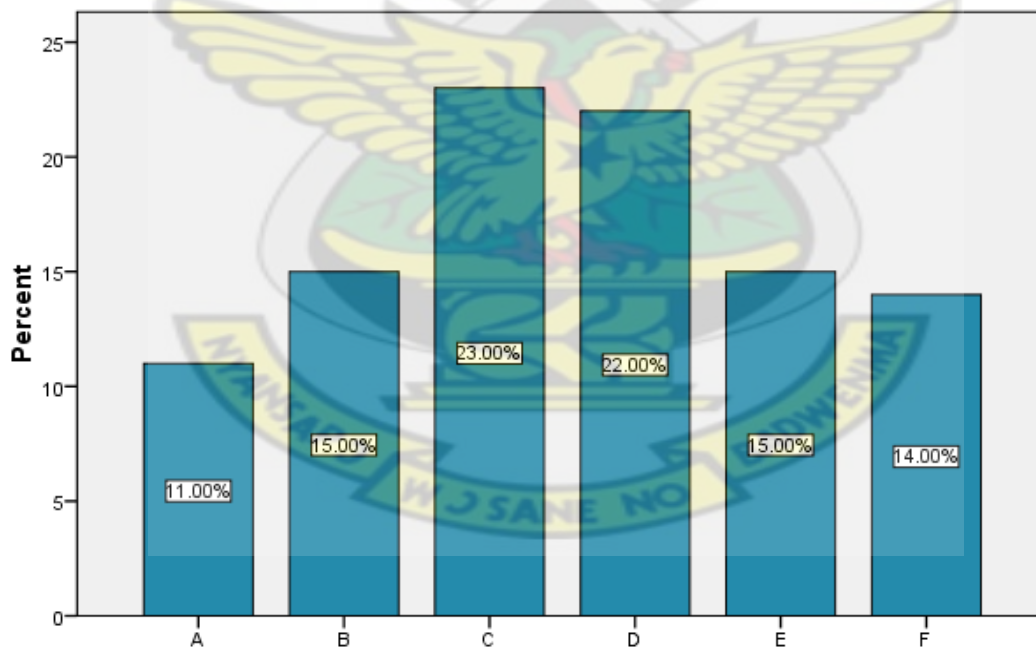


Fig 4.6 Type of Service Received from the Forest Services Division (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011.

LEGEND

A= Timber Harvest Permit Acquisition

D= Non- Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

B= Property Mark Renewal

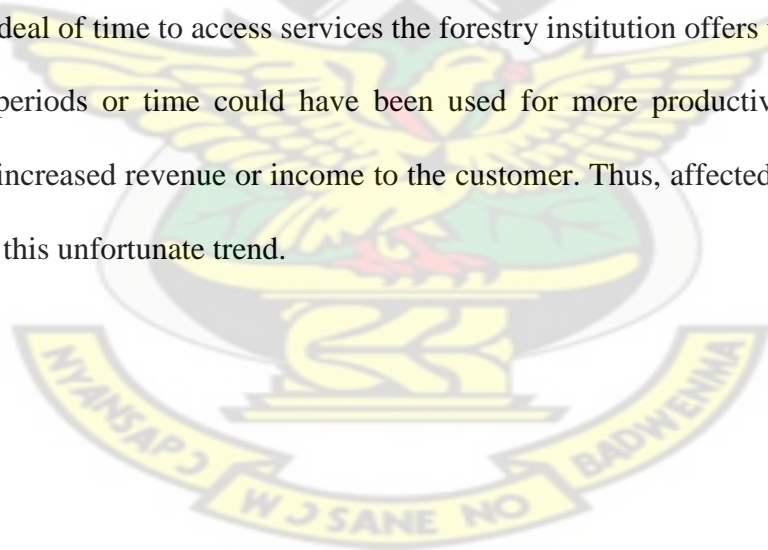
E= Sand winning permit

C= Permit to harvest wood (Charcoal Pdtm)

F= Stone winning permit

4.3.3 Frequency of Follow – up Calls for Services

Figure 4.8 indicates that 33% of the respondents made follow up calls once while 19% made monthly follow- up call for services. Fourteen per cent, 12%, 9%, 7% and 6% of the respondents made follow up calls at the offices of the Forestry Commission once a year, quarterly, half- yearly, fortnightly and weekly respectively. This implies that customers spend a great deal of time to access services the forestry institution offers to the public. These follow – up periods or time could have been used for more productive work which can translate into increased revenue or income to the customer. Thus, affected customers shall be unhappy with this unfortunate trend.



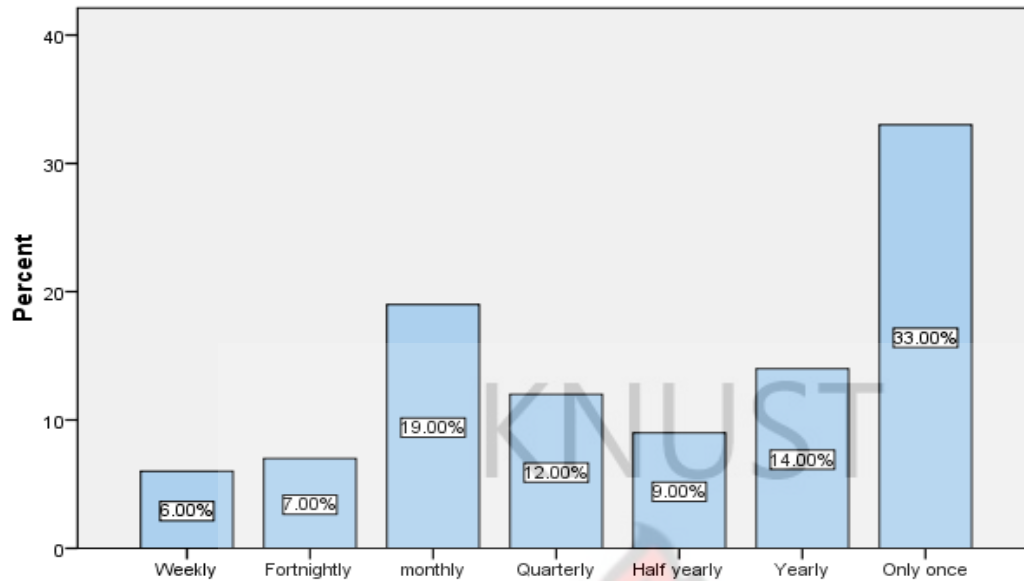


Fig 4.7 Frequency of Follow up Calls for Services by Respondents (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.3.4 Respondent's Satisfaction with Services Rendered

Eighty one per cent (81%) of respondents were satisfied with the service rendered by the Forestry Commission while 13% were not satisfied. Six per cent (6%) showed indifference (no comment). It is inferred that majority of respondents were satisfied with services the FSD renders in the Northern Region as illustrated in Figure 4.8. Since good customer service influences customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and hence customer retention, there is the likelihood that the Forestry Commission shall continue to receive patronage of its services from its customers. This is consistent with the positions by Hoyer and MacInni, 2001; Zineldin, 2000; Kotler, 2000; Sivadas and Baker- Prewitt, 2000; Hokanson, 1995 and Parasuraman *et al*, 1991. Bowen and Chen (2001) assert that having satisfied customers is not enough, there has to be extremely satisfied customers. This is because customer

satisfaction must lead to customer loyalty. To Bansal and Gupta (2001), building customer loyalty is not a choice any longer with businesses: it is the only way of building sustainable competitive advantage. Gerpott *et al* (2001), argue that organisations should strive always to ensure that their customers are very satisfied for a good customer service is a direct determining factor in customer satisfaction, loyalty which in turn is a central determinant of customer retention. Zairi (2000) intimates that there are numerous studies that have looked at the impact of customer satisfaction on repeat purchase, loyalty and retention. They all convey similar messages in that: satisfied customers are most likely to share their experiences with other people to the order of perhaps five or six people. Similarly, dissatisfied customers are more likely to tell another ten people of their unfortunate experience and lastly, if people believe that dealing with customer satisfaction is costly, they need to realize that it costs as much as 25% more to recruit new customers.

The 81% customer base among respondents stands the chance of becoming advocates for the organisation (i.e. Forestry Commission) without any incentive- a position held by Oliver (1997). Fornell (1992) said high customer satisfaction through good customer service will result in increased loyalty for the firm since customers will be less prone to overtures from competition. To McIlroy and Barnett (2000), an important concept to consider when developing a customer loyalty programme is customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is a measure of how well a customer's expectations are met while customer loyalty is a measure of how likely a customer is to re-purchase and engage in relationship activities. Loyalty is vulnerable because even if customers are satisfied with the service they will continue to defect if they believe they can get better value, convenience or quality elsewhere. Therefore, customer satisfaction is not an accurate indicator of loyalty. Satisfaction is a necessary but

not a sufficient condition of loyalty. In other words, we can have satisfaction without loyalty, but it is hard to have loyalty without satisfaction, they concluded. The Forestry Commission should therefore strive to retain the 81% satisfied customer base.

The 19% (13% No; 6% Indifference or No Comment) may fall prey to situational influences and marketing efforts/ strategies from competitors that have the potential to cause switching behaviours and ought to be worked on to prevent the inevitable. Consequently, the Forestry Commission ought to re- strategise since Zairi (2000), intimates that the numerous studies that have looked at the impact of customer satisfaction on repeat purchase, loyalty and retention have all concluded that: satisfied customers are most likely to share their experiences with other people to the order of perhaps five or six people. Similarly, dissatisfied customers are more likely to tell another ten people of their unfortunate experience. Lastly, if people believe that dealing with customer satisfaction is costly, they need to realise that it costs as much as 25% (one – quarter) more to recruit new customers.

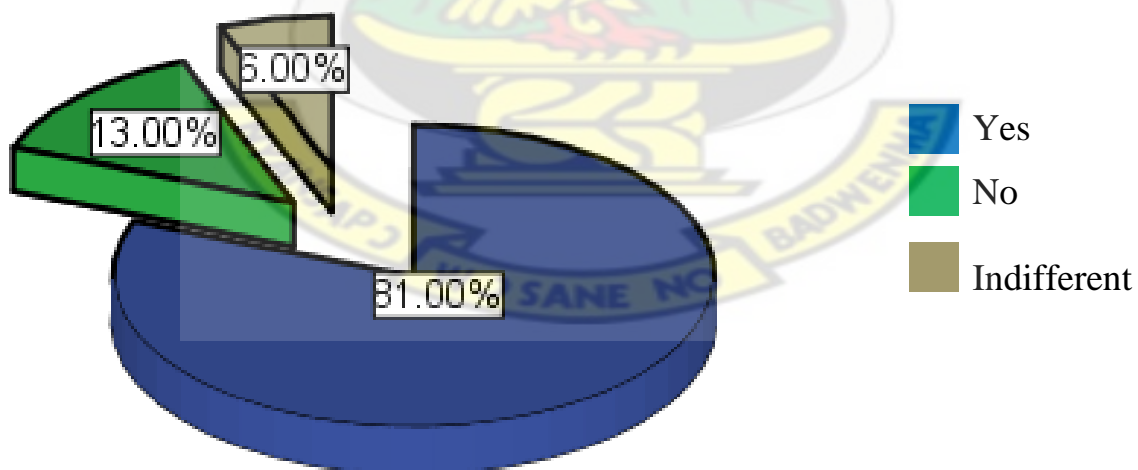


Fig 4.8 Respondents' Satisfaction with Service(s)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.3.5 The Length of Time Taken to Receive a Service

The results depict that 24% of the respondents received the service within 1- 3 weeks while 17% received this in less than one week. Sixteen per cent, 15% each and 13% of respondents received the service in 10 weeks or more, instantly (same day), 4-6weeks and in 7- 9weeks respectively. This is illustrated in Figure 4.9. According to Hokanson (1995) Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), other factors come into play to influence the satisfaction of the customer. These include timeliness of service delivery, friendly, courteous and knowledgeable employees, helpful employees, accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity among others. Whereas 15% received the service the same day or instantly or promptly, 17% received the service in less than one week with 16% accessing service for 10 weeks or more. This unacceptable trend shall no doubt affect customer satisfaction and most likely accounted for the 19% that were not satisfied. This number may fall prey to switching overtures as in Figure 4.9. Customer satisfaction is important because satisfaction influences re-purchase intentions whereas dissatisfaction has been seen as a primary reason for customer defection or discontinuation of purchase (La Barbera and Mazursky, 1983).

However, management staff contends that:

The waiting time for service delivery is dependent on the type of service –e.g. whereas enquiries from files can be delivered/accessed instantly, services that require field verifications can last between 3-4 days or even more since this activity is contingent on the availability of staff and appropriate field logistics. Furthermore, the time for service delivery lengthens when approvals must be secured from the Head Office in Accra.

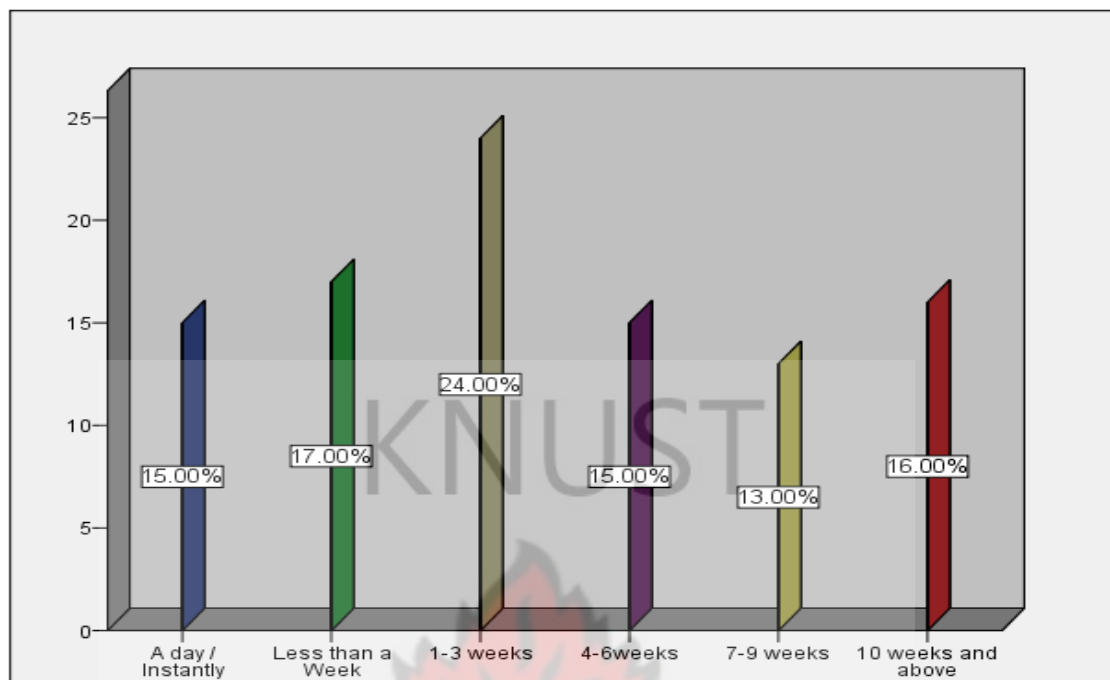


Fig 4.9 Length of Time Taken to Receive the Service (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011.

4.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DELAYED SERVICES

This section presents the respondents' views on some hitches as they access service in the five forest districts.

4.4.1 Rating of Attitude of the Forest Services Division

An assessment of the factors contributing to the delayed services rendered by the Forest Services Division (FSD) reveals the following: thirty one per cent (31%) rated the FSD staff attitude as *Good* and 28% rated the staff as *Very Good*. Twenty one per cent (21%) and 17% of the respondents rated the staff as *Fair* and *Excellent* respectively when approached.

Only 3% rated staff attitude as *Bad*. This is shown in Figure 4.10

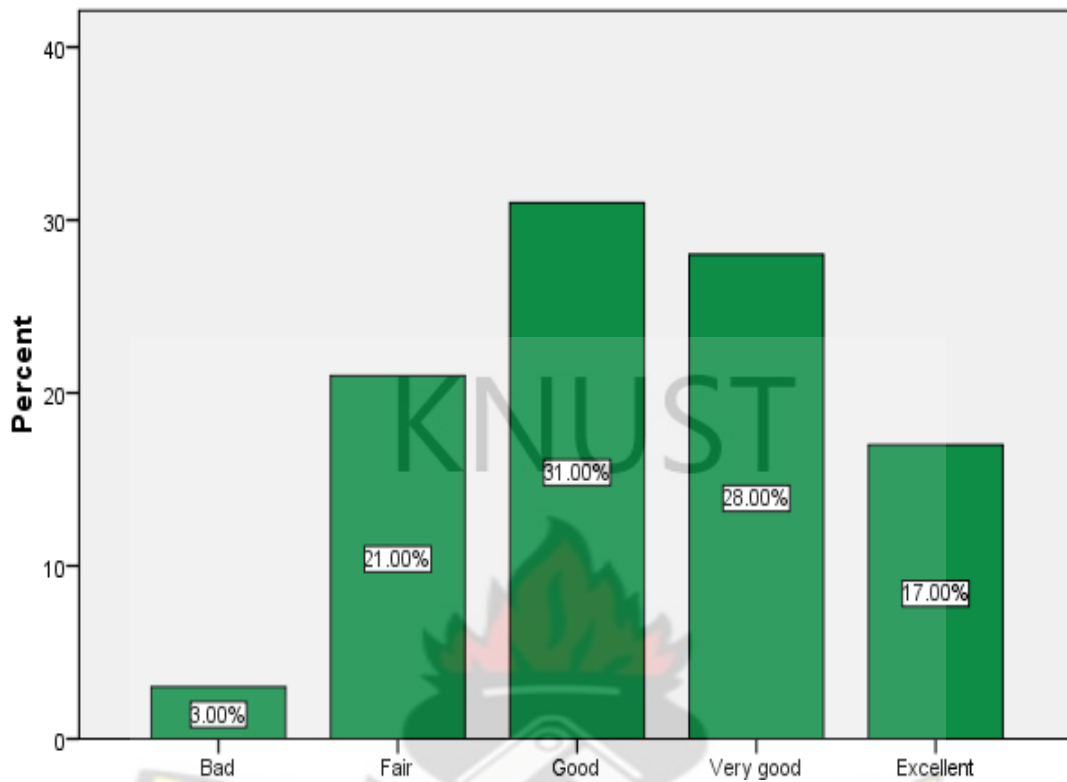


Fig 4.10 Respondents' Rating of Attitude of Forestry Staff (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.4.2 Staff Interactive Relations with Service Recipient

The outcome in Figure 4.10 confirms the widely held opinion that employees' attitudes can enhance the corporate image of the institution in which they work. Actions such as :the immediate dispatch of letters, offer of seat with a smile, offer of a free cold beverage, engagement of customer with current affairs while in waiting to enquiring about the welfare of customers' dependants all go to re- enforce the point that businesses are built on the relationships established with one's customers. This is shown in Table 4.2.

The management staff corroborated that:

Extending courtesies to customers through the offer of seats and cold beverages, handshakes and listening attentively to the customers etc when they call at the offices go a long way to attract and retain customers.

This is consistent with Timm (2008) and Scott (2002) assertion that today's customers are seeking, and even expecting on-line experiences that are interactive, personalized and social just for them (www.ecustomerserviceworld.com). No enterprise succeeds without attracting, building and keeping loyal customers i.e. *people with whom we exchange value*. Likewise, no organisation or enterprise can make a good living (which is customer satisfaction) without meeting the needs of its customers. That is what people do in organizations: they serve others and they succeed through service (Timm, 2008; Scott, 2002). Additionally, the staff or employees ought to exhibit promptness in service delivery, social skills like being friendly and courteous, empathy, thoughtfulness, adequate knowledge about the service, be helpful, accuracy of billing, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity among others (Hoyer and McInnis, 2001; Hokanson, 1995).

Table 4.2 Staff's Interactive Relation with Service Recipient

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Recipient and Families' Welfare	14	14.0	14.0
Immediate Dispatch of Letter to the Manager	40	40.0	54.0
Offer of a free Cold drink whiles waiting	3	3.0	57.0
Staff engaged Service Recipient in current affairs	7	7.0	64.0
An offer of a seat with a smile	32	32.0	96.0
Nothing	4	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, April 2011

4.4.3 The Effect of Language on Service Delivery

Eighty two per cent (82%) of the respondents indicate that language was not a contributing factor while 18% affirm that language formed part of the problem for the delayed services. This is shown in figure 4.11. Strategies should be developed to win customer confidence since this has far reaching implications on the fortunes of the organisation. Kotler (2009), outlining some causes of poor customer service or unsuccessful service delivery (customer worries) hinted that, these culminate into: gap between service-quality specifications and service delivery, gap between service delivery and external communications and gap between perceived service and expected service. He concluded that some of the determinants of service quality include: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles. He intimated that some best strategies towards good customer service should include: top-management commitment, high standards, self-service technologies, monitoring systems, satisfying customer complaints, satisfying employees and strategic concept.

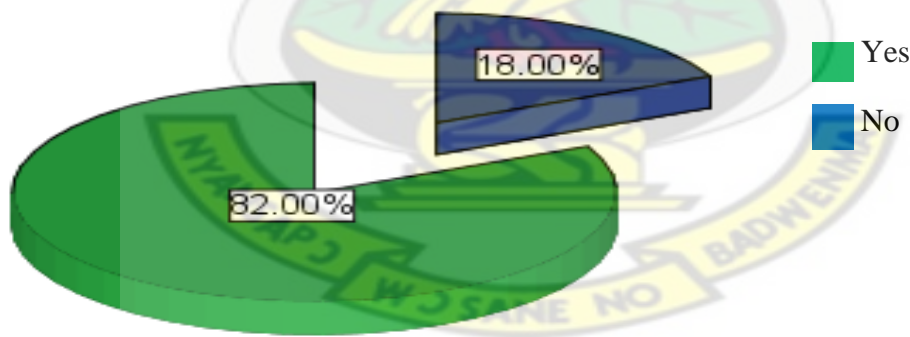


Fig 4.11 Was Language the Cause of the Delayed Service(s) (%)?

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.4.4 Causes of Delayed Services

Respondents indicate that some causes to the delayed services include increased workload on the manager (19%), bureaucracy in the Forestry Commission (16%), absence of the Schedule Officer and/ or Technical Officer (10% each) and Communication (8%). Thirty four per cent (34%) of the stakeholders claim they have no clue to the cause of the delay by the Forestry Commission. This is shown in Figure 4.12. These obstacles/ barriers impede the realisation of customer satisfaction, hence customer loyalty and eventually customer retention. The 34% of the respondents who have no clues to the cause of the delayed service are prone to switching overtures when given the option. They are among the dissatisfied customers of the Forestry Commission. Persistent and conscious efforts through training by top management be pursued so as to sustain the loyalty of these customers and hence profitability. This is shown in Figure 4.12. Bowen and Chen (2001), supported the assertion that there is a positive correlation between loyal customers and profitability. They concluded that loyal customers indeed provide more repeat business and were less likely to shop around for the best deals than non-loyal customers.

Management Staff through the Focus Group Discussion noted that:

Indeed the frontline staffs in the office occasionally frustrate customers through their inability to promptly trace appropriate files (through incompetence. Similarly, the lack or absences of logistics (e.g. vehicles) to field verify customer request(s) and sometimes the absence of a Schedule Officer delay service delivery.

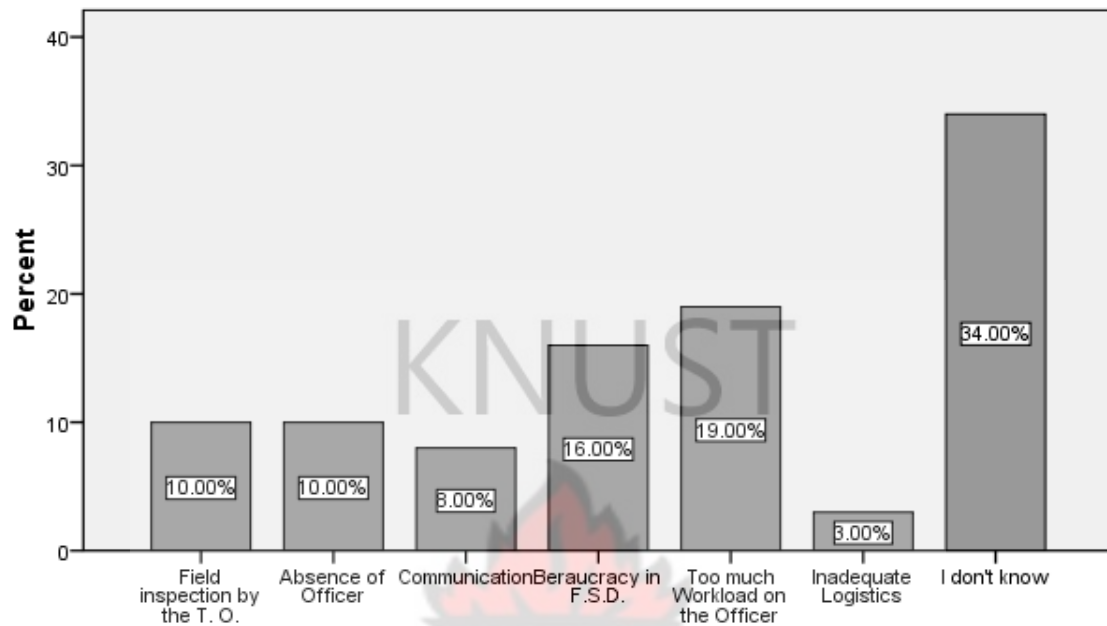


Fig 4.12 Respondents' Reasons for the Delayed Services (%).

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.4.5 Staff Attitude Disliked by Respondents

The results in Table 4.3 confirm the widely held perception that customers would not be happy when the service provider displayed untoward attitudes those who did like frowning at the customer was 1%, insulting customer was 1%, show unfriendliness were 7%, disregarding the presence of the customer in the office were 5%, never attach any seriousness to the customers' request were 9%, undue postponement of request were 27%, others were 2% and indifference were 48%. According to Kotler (2009), quality customer service is when our customers come back and our products do not. He enumerated some general causes of unsuccessful service delivery (customer worries) as failure frequency, downtime, and out-of-pocket costs. He further asserted that, these culminate into: gap between service delivery and

external communications (e.g. frowning, insults, unfriendliness, disregarding the presence of the customer) and gap between perceived service and expected service. He concluded that some of the determinants of service quality include: responsiveness, assurance, empathy.

Kotler (2009) intimated that some best strategies towards ensuring good customer service should include: top-management commitment, high standards, self-service technologies, monitoring systems, satisfying customer complaints, satisfying employees and strategic concept. It is expected that service delivery at the Forest Services Division should be in consonance the Kotler's provisions to ensure enhanced customer satisfaction.

Table 4.3 Staff Attitude Disliked by Respondent

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Staff Frowned the Face upon seeing me	1	1.0	1.0
Staff insulted me	1	1.0	2.0
Staff was not Friendly	7	7.0	9.0
Staff Disregarded my presence	5	5.0	14.0
Staff's unseriousness	9	9.0	23.0
Staff unduly postponed my work	27	27.0	50.0
Others.....	2	2.0	52.0
No such attitude	48	48.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

1.7 THE EFFECTS OF DELAYED SERVICE(S) ON CUSTOMER(S)

The results of the Respondents' views on the effects of the delayed service are as discussed below:

4.5.1 Delayed Services and the Customer

The delay in the provision of prompt services to the customer can have dire consequences or implications on both the service provider and the customer. Data from Figure 4.13 reveals that 14% said there is loss of customers to competitors, threat of loyal customers to switch to regions where better service delivery are assured of accounted for 7%, battered reputation (13%), loss of revenue (19%) for the period in waiting, felt traumatized or ill (3%), other negative effects (7%). Thirty seven per cent (37%) indicate that the delayed services by the Forest Services Division had no effect on them. This is illustrated in Figure.4.13.

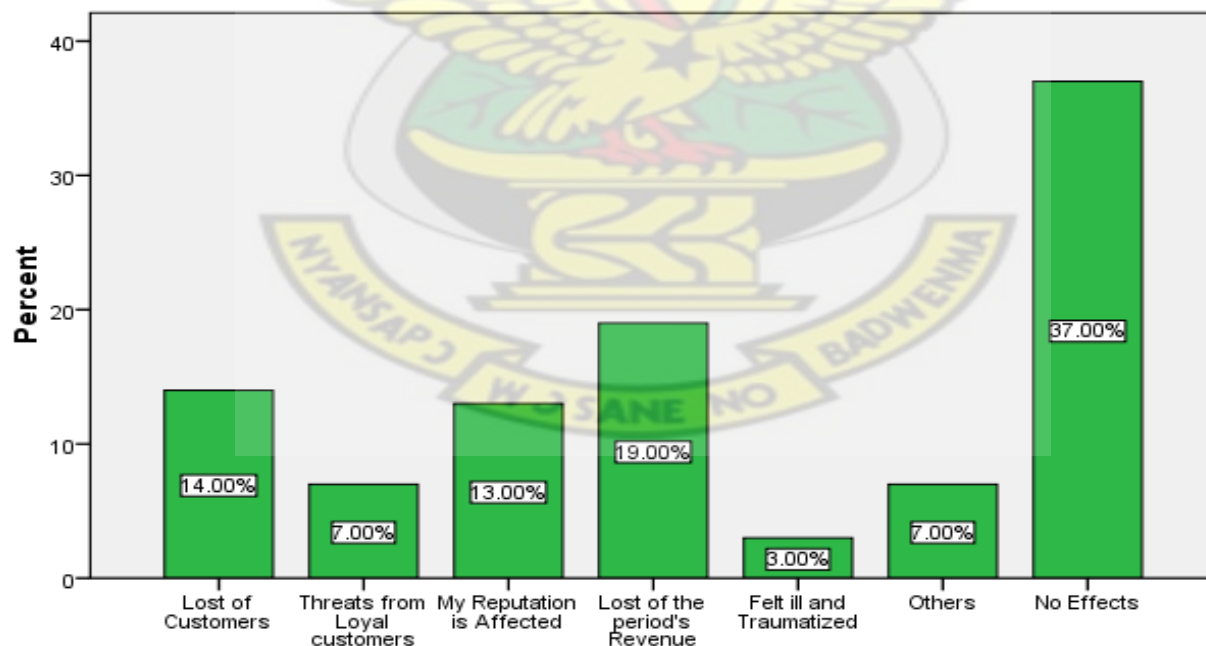


Fig 4.13 Effects of Delayed Services on Customers (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

The customer is viewed as the one who decides what quality is; quality therefore begins and ends with the customer. To Kotler (2009), great customer service is about: figuring out what your customers want, getting it for them accurately, politely and enthusiastically with a smile, going extra mile and say 'thank you' and be courteous, listening to the needs of the customer, reliability of the products, basic service and service design, recovery of the product, surprising customers, fair play to all, teamwork or networking, employee research and development and servant leadership. This implies that anything short of these shall be termed poor customer service. Poor customer service shall lead to a dissatisfied customer, his/ her loyalty shall suffer and so will be his/ her willingness to repeat purchase of products/ goods from the company. This then leads to a dwindling finance base. This assertion is confirmed by Anton (1996) who said that satisfaction is positively associated with re-purchase intentions, likelihood of recommending a product or service, loyalty and profitability. Evans and Berman (1997) are also of the opinion that loyal customers would purchase from the organisation ,over an extended period of time while Guiltinan *et al* (1997), said that satisfied customers are more likely to be repeat (and even become loyal) customers. MacIlroy and Barnett (2000) continued that in a business context loyalty has come to describe a customer's commitment to do business with a particular organisation, purchasing their goods and services repeatedly, and recommending the services and products to friends and associates. Anderson and Jacobsen (2000) said customer loyalty is actually the result of an organisation creating a benefit for a customer so that they will maintain or increase their purchases from the organisation. They said that true customer loyalty is created when the customer becomes an advocate for the organisation, without incentive. On loyalty and profitability, Bowen and Chen (2001) concluded that it is a commonly known fact that there

is a positive relationship between customer loyalty and profitability. Today, marketers are seeking information on how to build customer loyalty. The increased profit comes from reduced marketing costs, increased sales and reduced operational costs. They added that, loyal customers cost less to serve, in part because they know the product and require less information. They even serve as part-time employees. Therefore loyal customers not only require less information themselves, they also serve as an information source for other customers.

4.5.2 Perception of Customers on General Service Delivery

From Figure 4.14, an overwhelming number of respondents (70%) perceived the general service delivery by the Forestry Commission in the Northern Region as Good. Sixteen per cent of the respondents think otherwise while 14% remain indifferent (no comment).

Perception is a process of selecting, organizing, interpreting and responding to issues from the environment. It is the individual's interpretation of what the reality is.

Management Staff was unanimous to assert that:

Despite the limited logistics and low staff numbers due to the current temporary ban on employment, the current rating of service delivery by customers in the five forest districts is Very Good. This is partly attributable to the speed with which customers' requests are handled and a one day in – service training organized for all frontline staff.

Organisation (s) with positive or good perception can attract best brain to assist them discharge their functions more efficiently than a poorly perceived firm. According to Smith (1994), customers not only have power in terms of where they wish to buy, what they wish to

buy and how they wish to buy it but they also enjoy increasing level of customer protection which places the burden of responsibility on the service provider (customer perspective). This customer expects, competent and efficient services, basic courtesies, to be informed of options, to be listened to, knowledgeable help, friendliness, feedback, honesty and respect, professional service and above all dedicated attention (Parasuraman *et al*, 1991). A poorly perceived organisation stands the risk of losing all these.

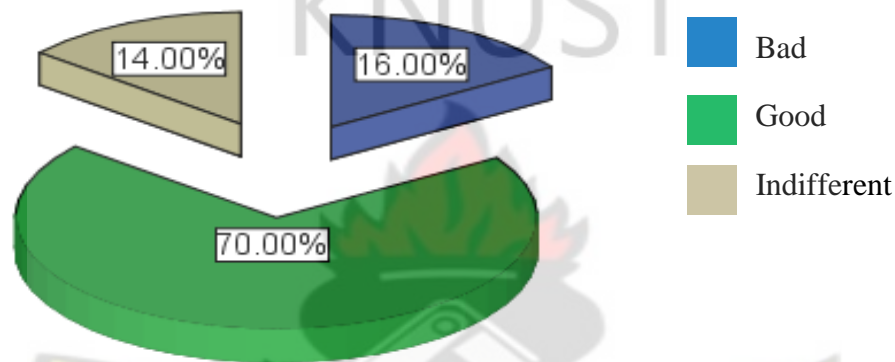


Fig 4.14 Perception of Customers on General Service Delivery by the FC (%)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

4.6 ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE AT FOREST SERVICES DIVISION

This section of the report is on enhancing customer service of the Ghana Forestry Commission.

4.6.1 Suggestions for Improvement

Table 4.4 captures the following as requirements to improve upon the delivery of its current services: Quick response to customers' requests (25%), upgrading and employment of more staff (23%), prompt and adequate field inspections (12%), education and sensitization of customers (5%), institution of incentive packages (12%), upgrade of Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure (6%) and others (17%).

Table 4.4 Respondents' Suggestions for Improvement

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education and Sensitization of clients	5	5.0	5.0
Quick Responds to Clients	25	25.0	30.0
Quick and adequate Field Inspection	12	12.0	42.0
Upgrade and employ more staff	23	23.0	65.0
Incentive packages	12	12.0	77.0
I. T advancement	6	6.0	83.0
Others	17	17.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

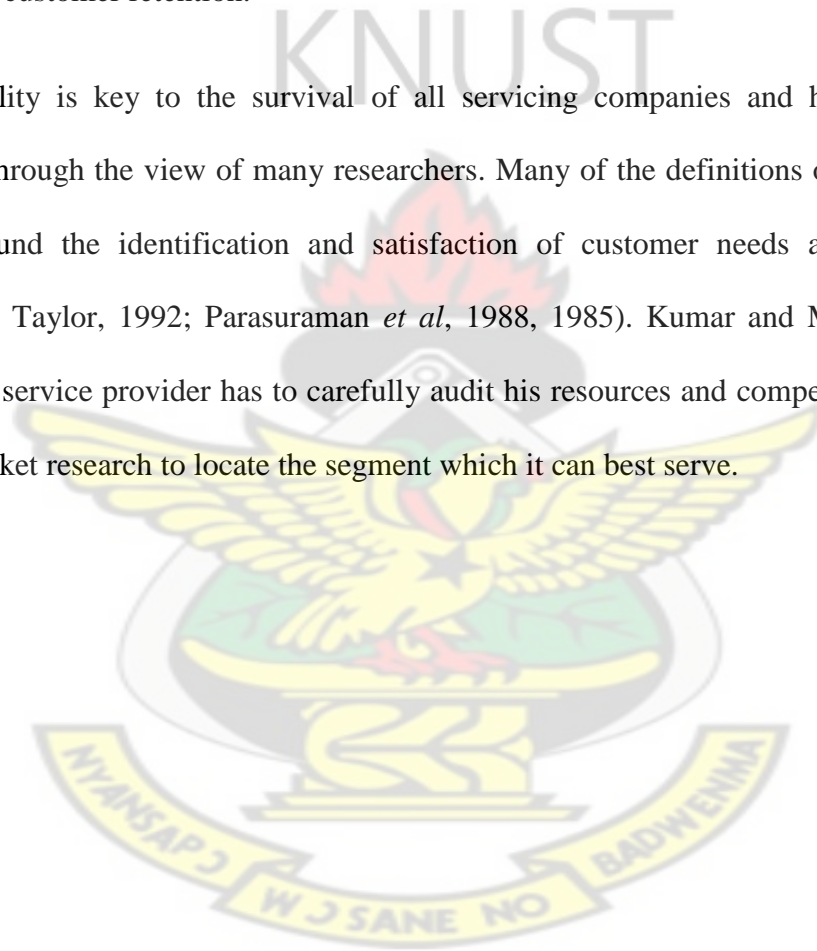
Additionally, respondents enumerated the following as worth considering as the Forestry Commission (FC) attempts to improve upon its current customer service delivery. This is depicted in Figure 4.15: delegation of authority (16%), authority at the district level (15%), employ more staff (13%), just be good at service delivery (24%), provision of logistics (26%) and others (6%).

The Management Staff also noted that:

A good rapport should exist between the Forest Services Division and its stakeholders through periodic workshops detailing services that can be delivered at each level i.e. the District, Region and the Head Office, and the improvement of facilities at the Registry/Reception. Also cited were the issues of political interference to circumvent standard procedures by customers and the need for the Head office to decentralize some of its operations to the Regional offices to ease the current delay in accessing services.

Research by top management provides the platform or avenue for the organisation to receive input(s) from customers. Adherence to or full implementation of the suggestions or the changes customers want to receive or see ensures permanence in the relationship and image building process of the organisation. This assertion is consistent with Day's (1994), opinion that the identification (for example through research) and satisfaction of customer needs lead to improved customer retention.

Service quality is key to the survival of all servicing companies and has been defined differently through the view of many researchers. Many of the definitions of service quality revolve around the identification and satisfaction of customer needs and requirements (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman *et al*, 1988, 1985). Kumar and Menakshi (2007), opine that a service provider has to carefully audit his resources and competencies, and then conduct market research to locate the segment which it can best serve.



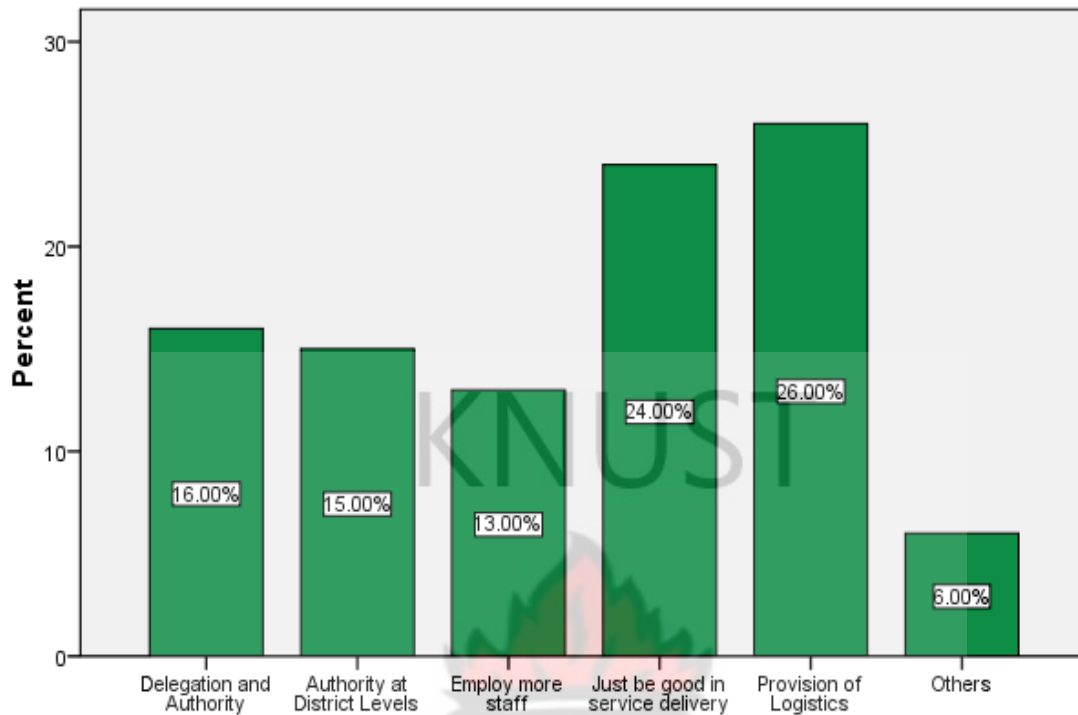


Fig 4.15 Respondents' Inputs on Customer Service Improvement in the Forestry Commission (%) (Optional)

Source: Field Survey, April, 2011

To Kotler (2009), researches must be undertaken to address the gap between service-quality specifications and service delivery, gap between service delivery and external communications and gap between perceived service and expected service. He concluded that great customer service is about: listening to the needs of the customer or figuring out what your customers want, getting it for them accurately, politely and enthusiastically with a smile, going extra mile and say 'thank you'.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 KEY FINDINGS

The study brought into sharp focus the following issues in the Northern Region for consideration by the Ghana Forestry Commission:

5.1.1 Demography

Eighty per cent (80%) of the stakeholders interviewed were Males while 20% constituted females. Eighty two per cent (82%) of the respondents sampled were above 30 years old and eighteen per cent (18%) of the adults fall within the 20 - 29 age range. Fifty nine per cent (59%) of the stakeholders interviewed were Individuals, Youth Groups (12%), Traditional Rulers (8%), Non- Governmental Organisations (4%), Timber Contractors (1%), District Assemblies (6%), Institutions (4%) and Others (6%). The number of respondents were proportionately higher in the Tamale forest district than the other areas (27%), Walewale (21%), Damongo (19%), Yendi (17%) and Bole (16%) in that order (Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1).

5.1.2 Awareness of the Services or Functions of the Forest Services Division in the Northern Region

Ninety two per cent (92%) of the stakeholders interviewed know the services the Forestry Commission performs and 8% have no adequate knowledge about these services.

5.1.3 Type of Service Received from the Forest Services Division of the Forestry Commission

Permits to harvest tree(s) for charcoal production, stumpage / royalty payments, seedlings purchase, permits to squat at the fringes of the forest reserves and provision of technical advice(in that order) are the most sought -after services by the stakeholders in the Northern Region.

5.1.4 Respondents' Satisfaction with Services

Nineteen per cent (19%) of the stakeholders interviewed were not satisfied with the current services they receive from the Forestry Commission while 81% think otherwise. However, the respondents rated the attitude of approached forestry staff as Good (31%), Vey Good (28%), Fair (21%), Excellent (17%) and Bad (3%).

5.1.5 Respondents' Reasons for the Delayed Services

Delayed customer service delivery by the Forestry Commission in the Northern Region are due to non-delegation of authority by superior officers, increased workload of the Manager, lack of equipment, lack of staff, bureaucracy, communication or language barrier, poor attitude of working staff and the deliberate refusal to serve the customer (s) when approached.

5.1.6 Staffs' Interactive Relation with Service Recipient

The respondents were impressed with the staff for exhibiting the following: prompt dispatch of letter to manager (40%), offer of cold drink while waiting to receive service (3%), staff

engaged customer with some current affairs (7%), staff offered a seat for customer with a smile (32%) - these ought to be re-enforced.

5.1.7 Staffs' Attitude Disliked by Respondent

Poor job etiquette is among the factors that affect the corporate image of institutions. This study has brought into sharp focus issues such as Staff frowning the face on seeing the customer (1%), Staff insulting the customer (1%), Staff not exhibiting friendliness (7%), Staff disregarding the presence of the customer (5%), Staff not just seriousness with his/ her work (9%), staff unduly postponing work/ tasks brought in by customers (27%), others (2%) and no such attitude (48%).

5.1.8 Effects of Delayed Service on Customers

The delayed customer service resulted in the following according to the stakeholders interviewed: Loss of customers (14%), threats from loyal customers to switch (7%), battered image (13%), loss of revenue (19%), traumatized / ill (3%), others (7%) and No Effects (37%).

5.1.9 Perception of Customers on the General Service Delivery by the Forestry Commission

Seventy per cent (70%) of the stakeholders interviewed perceive the current services they access from the Forestry Commission as Good , 16% think otherwise and 14% were indifferent/ No comment.

5.1.10 Respondents' Suggestions for Improvements (Optional)

The respondents suggested the following for improvements : upgrading through training and employment of staff (23%), provision of logistics (26%), prompt and adequate field inspections (12%), education and sensitisation of customers (5%), institution of incentive packages (12%), upgrading of Internet and Communication Technology infrastructure (6%), others (17%) and just be good at customer service delivery (24%)

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Since service is any act of performance that one party can offer another that is essentially intangible, utmost care ought to be taken in dispensing it. Unlike products where quality is often measured against accepted standards, service quality is measured against performance. Because most customers are very clear about the quality of the service they want, they walk into premises expecting that level of service. They get disappointed if their expectations are not met, because such expectations are very precise. The poor service attitude revealed by this study can be attributed to poor attitudes and etiquette among the individual staff.

The study reveals that gaps exist between consumer expectation and management perception, between management perception and service-quality specifications, between service-quality specifications and service delivery, between service delivery and external communications, between perceived service and expected service – these have become general causes of unsuccessful service delivery or customer worries and ought to be addressed by the Forestry Commission.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of this study, the following are recommended:

5.3.1 Ease Current Pressure and Secure Forest Resource Base

To ease the pressure on the natural forest to harvest trees for charcoal production and to ensure sustainability of the forest resources, Alternative Livelihood Schemes (bee keeping, mushroom growing, grasscutter rearing, confectionary enterprise, fish farming, dress and bead making etc) should be introduced. Additionally enrichment planting of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) must be vigorously pursued as a vital activity since natural regenerations cannot cope with the current levels of harvests in the Northern Region.

In order to secure the resource base, interventions such as, wildfire prevention, protection and control during the long dry spell be jointly undertaken by the Forestry Commission and the Ghana National Fire Service.

5.3.2 Customers Dissatisfaction with Current Levels of Service

To address the issue of customers' dissatisfaction with current levels of service, the Forestry Commission should consciously introduce a customer service training programme for all its staff categories. Staff who put up poor attitude towards customers after attending this training should be severely reprimanded by their superior officers (e.g. reflect in their end- of- year appraisal reports, mid- year performance review meetings, demotions etc)

5.3.3 Soliciting the Interest of Stakeholders

In addition to the customer service training programmes, efforts should be made to solicit the interests of stakeholders. Suggestion boxes should be placed at strategic places in the forestry

offices in the Northern Region to capture these opinions for periodic analysis. In addition, Electronic Mails, telephone numbers and Web Sites designated for literate customers could be accessed to promote personalized and interactive dialogue. This would translate into increased customer confidence, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

5.3.4 Creation of Customer Services Centre

Customer Services Centres should be created as special departments in all the ten (10) regional forestry offices of the country by the Forestry Commission to give true meaning to the practice of good customer service. There should be a reward system in place to re-enforce great customer service in the regions by the Forestry Commission.

5.3.5 Staff Training and Upgrading of ICT Infrastructure

To improve upon the delivery of current services, periodic staff training be undertaken. Beneficiary staff shall be equipped with the requisite skills to deal effectively with the current emerging issues or demands of customers. Also of vital importance is the upgrading of the Forestry Commission's Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) to cope with these increased demands.

5.3.6 Cope with Increased Workload

The current reduced staff strength of the Forestry Commission to cope with the increased workload at the district and regional forestry offices can be resolved by lifting the current freeze on employment by government. Increased staff strength through employment of competent staff should result in enhanced speed with which service is delivered.

5.3.7 Sustainability of Services of the Forestry Commission

There should be a periodic Forest Service Division, communities and customer interface to share issues of common interests. This will enhance processes of sustainability of services of the Forestry Commission.

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APPENDIX I

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE LEARNING)
EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMME

QUESTIONNAIRE

TOPIC: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE GHANA FORESTRY COMMISSION: THE CASE OF THE FOREST SERVICES DIVISION IN THE NORTHERN REGION.

The aim of this survey is to solicit the views from customers on the varied services the Forest Services Division (FSD) renders (i.e. way and manner). The responses shall contribute to the current drive to provide enhanced services by the Forestry Commission to its numerous clientele.

(NOTE: TICK OR PROVIDE ANSWER WHERE APPLICABLE)

A. General Information

Name: (Optional) Sex: M/F Age:.....

Forest District:..... Political District:.....

Type of stakeholder: (tick)

Traditional ruler ☐ NGO ☐ Youth Group ☐

Timber Contractors ☐ District Assembly ☐ Individual ☐

Institutions ☐ Other (specify).....

B. Determination Of Waiting Time Of Customers For Service Delivery

1. Do you know the services/ functions the FSD performs in your district?
(Tick) YES ☐ NO ☐

2. What type of service(s) do you receive from the FSD office? You may tick more than one if applicable

a. Acquiring timber harvesting permit

- b. Renewal of property mark to harvest timber
- c. Acquiring permit to harvest wood for charcoal production
- d. Acquiring permit to harvest 'food wrapping leaves', fodder, fuel wood, medicinal plants, pestle, chew stick, canes, bamboo, rafters for building, grass for roofing etc
- e. Acquiring permit to win sand
- f. Acquiring permit to win stone

Payment of royalty/ stumpage fees

- g. Securing the permit to farm in the forest reserve
- h. Purchasing of tree seedlings
- i. Purchasing of seeds
- j. Seek technical advice
- k. Paying fees for Squatting at the fringe of the forest reserve

3. Which year did you receive such service(s)?

4. For how long have you been undertaking/ receiving this/ these service/ services?(tick):

1- 5months ☐ 6- 11 months ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-7 years ☐
above 8 years ☐

5. How frequently / how many times do you call at the office for this service (tick)

- a. Weekly ☐ b. fortnightly ☐ c. monthly ☐ d. quarterly ☐
- e. half yearly ☐ f. once a year ☐ g. only once ☐

6. Were you satisfied/ happy with the service? (tick)

YES ☐ NO ☐ INDIFFERENT/ NO COMMENT ☐

7. How long (in days or weeks or months) did it take to receive this service?.....

8. In your estimation, how long should you have taken to receive this service? On a scale of 1 to 5 rank them

1=1/2 ; 2=1/4; 3=1/6; 4=1/8; 5=1/10 time (i.e. If negative).

and 1= satisfy with time; 2=2times; 3=thrice; 4=four times; 5=five times the time he/she spent on that service (if positive).

C. Assessment Of Factors Contributing To Delayed Services

1. On a scale of 1 – 5, rate the attitude of the staff you approached (1=bad; 2=fair; 3=good; 4= very good and 5= excellent) (tick)

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

2. Do you think language was a problem? Yes ☐ No ☐

3. What might have caused the delay?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. What did the staff do that made you to be happy? (tick)

- a. The staff asked about my welfare and my dependants / families
- b. The staff received my request or letter and sent it to the Manager who treated it with dispatch. Therefore I did not waste time at all at the office
- c. The staff offered some cold water or mineral(coke, fanta, sprite etc) when I waited for my letter from the Manager

- d. The staff engaged me with some current contemporary issues in the region or in Ghana
- e. The staff welcomed me with a smile and offered me a seat in his/her office
- f. (please state any other in the space below)
-
-
-

5. What did the staff do and you were not happy with (tick one)

- a. The staff frowned when he/she saw me in the office
- b. The staff insulted me
- c. The staff was not friendly at all
- d. The staff disregarded my presence
- e. The staff did not attach any seriousness to the work I brought
- g. The staff asked I should go and report the following day although he/she could have attended to me that same day
- h. please state any other in the space provided

.....

.....

.....

.....

D. Effects Of Delayed Services On Customers.

- 1. In what way(s) did the delay affect you?
 - a. It led to the lost of some of my customers
 - b. Most of my most loyal customers threatened to switch to other regions where services are better
 - c. It affected my reputation
 - d. I lost the revenue for the period

e. I felt ill and traumatized

f. State other in the space below

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

E. Perception of Customers on General Service Delivery.

1. What is/are your general impression(s) /perception(s) about customer service in the Forestry Commission? (tick)

BAD ☐ GOOD ☐ INDIFFERENT/NO COMMENT ☐

▪ If Bad, explain

.....
.....
.....
.....

▪ If Good, explain

.....
.....
.....
.....

▪ If Indifferent, explain

.....
.....
.....
.....

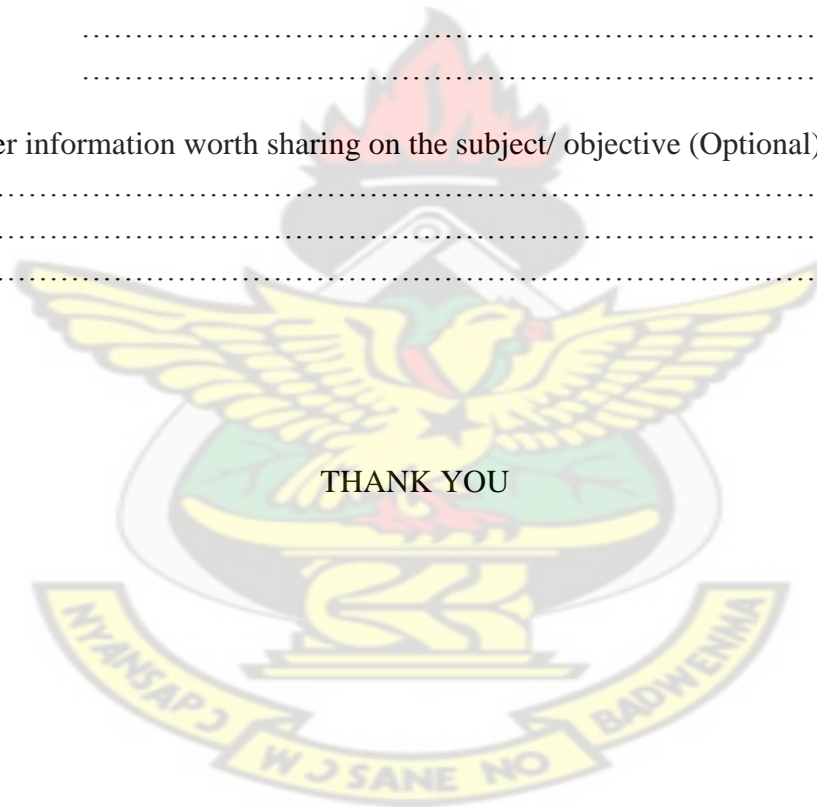
F. Suggestions for Improvements.

1. Suggest what the FSD should do to improve upon the delivery of its current services:

- a.
.....
.....
- b.
.....
.....
- c.
.....
.....

2. Any other information worth sharing on the subject/ objective (Optional):

.....
.....
.....



THANK YOU

APPENDIX IIa

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIV. OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE LEARNING)
EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMME**

QUESTIONNAIRE

TOPIC: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE GHANA FORESTRY COMMISSION: THE CASE OF THE FOREST SERVICES DIVISION IN THE NORTHERN REGION.

The aim of this interview/survey is to solicit the views from the Management Staff on the varied services the Forest Services Division (FSD) renders (i.e. way and manner). The responses shall contribute to the current drive to provide enhanced services by the Forestry Commission to its numerous clientele.

Q1 a. What is the average waiting time for service delivery in the Forest Services Division?

b. Has this been consistently adhered to?

c. If No, what factors contribute to the delay in the required service rendered?

Q2 a. Have you noticed any delays in rendering service to the customer?

b. Do you notice any effect (s) of the delayed service on customer satisfaction?

c. What plan(s) have you put in place to address this/these?

Q3a. What measures are adopted to retain existing customers and attract more customers?

b. What challenges or difficulties do you encounter as you attempt to attract and retain customers?

Q4. Generally how do customers rate the service delivery of the Forest Services Division (FSD)?

Q5. In your opinion, what other step(s) can be taken to address prompt customer service in your district?

APPENDIX IIb

Table of management staff of the Forest Services Division who participated in the focus group discussion and their locations in the Northern Region of Ghana

JOB TITLE OF RESPONDENT	LOCATION
Regional Manager	Tamale
Assistant Regional Manager	Tamale
Regional Accountant	Tamale
Human Resource Officer	Tamale
District Manager	Yendi
District Manager	Walewale
District Manager	Bole
District Manager	Tamale
District Manager	Damongo