THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE IN PETROLEUM RETAILING IN THIKA DISTRICT

Augustus P. Malonza
Department of Commerce Economic Studies
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

Dr. Patrick Karanja Ngugi
Department of Entrepreneurship and Procurement
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya


Abstract

Service quality is a viable strategy for marketers aiming to differentiate their service offerings, establishing customer value and ultimately satisfying consumer needs. Service quality has been used increasingly by marketers to leverage customer loyalty to confront the challenges of competition and ultimately deliver on organization profitability. From the investigations by the study, there is evidence that no study had so far been done to investigate the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing. The aim of this study was to determine the indicators of service quality to consumers in petroleum retail outlets, to establish the extent to which service quality influenced consumer preference in petroleum retail outlets and finally to identify any other factor that may also play a role in influencing consumer choice. The study used a conceptual model drawn using the service quality dimension attributes of Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Tangibles. The nature of this research is a descriptive research. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The survey instrument was subjected to overall reliability and validity tests using Cronbach alpha. Data analysis was done using SPSS.
Version 21 to generate quantitative reports which were presented in the form of tabulations, percentages, mean and standard deviation. ANOVA data analysis method was applied to analyze the data that was obtained from open ended questions. The study concludes that reliability affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that reliability was a component of trust in automated systems and that reliability was an important component of technology expectations, performance, and disconfirmation. The study recommends that the personnel in the retailing department should attend various training sessions to be competent enough to handle the present challenges like in the business world; this needs a lot of improvement in order to increase service delivery in petroleum industries.

Key words: Customer, Tangibles, Quality, Service, Service Quality, Responsiveness, Assurance

Background of the study

The most marked change in the structure of developed economies in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, particularly in the latter half has been the transformation from an emphasis on the manufacture of physical goods to the production of intangibles services. This radical shift is for example witnessed in the US, where workers employed in the service sector rose from a mere 30\% to an estimated 80\% by 1995 (Collins, Keiningham, Zahonik & Rust,1996).

One of the major ways a service firm can differentiate itself is by delivering consistently higher service quality than its competitors. Many companies are finding that outstanding service quality can give them a potent competitive advantage that leads to superior sales and profit performance. Indeed, some organizations are increasingly focusing their energy in building customer loyalty through offering superior quality services than their competitors. The delivery of high service quality is one of the most difficult tasks that any service organization faces today. The issue of
Service quality is of tantamount 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 competition, while only 8% listed price as a reason for switching (Donnelly & Peter, 1992).

**Statement of the Problem**

Service quality has been underscored as a viable strategy for marketers endeavouring to differentiate their service offerings, establishing customer value and ultimately satisfying consumer needs. By pursuing a service quality strategy, marketers are able to leverage customer support for their service offerings to both retain and build a loyal customer base. It has been established that as a result of liberalization, globally the market has witnessed severe competition in the various industry sectors. Service Quality has become a key component of confronting the new challenges alongside other factors such as price, product innovations and diversification of products and services.

Statistics available from the table given in the background, Shell/Bp 23.7%, Caltex 15.36%, Mobil (Oilibya) 10.75%, Total 13.32%, Kobil/Kenol 19.14%, NOCK 10.46%, and Independents 7.27%. All the oil companies represented by the various petrol service stations in the given area of the study market have a core product that is largely homogenous and undifferentiated. Therefore, their pricing is similar with marginal variations wherever they exist. There is perfect competition where largely they all work under the same market conditions. The core determinant for differentiation between the various petrol stations is the quality of service offered and the various different types of services on offer. As a result of activities by new entrants and realignment through buyout and mergers, some players have lost market share and profitability has shrunk for others. The need to focus on Quality service as a differentiation tool by petroleum marketers has become imminent as a consequence of the cutthroat competition that has emerged among players for the hearts and minds of customers in Kenya.
The endeavour to improve service quality has been seen through increased station staff training, better profiling of service station staff in terms of minimum academic and professional qualifications, Mystery shopper programmes, service station designs, branding and lighting to improve service delivery physical environment. The staff are also fitted with branded uniforms. Service diversification is also developed in the service stations with the view to enhancing the service quality for the station shopper. The competition waged around service quality between the various oil marketing companies (Shell, BP, Total, Caltex, Oilibya, Kenol-Kobil and the new entrants has largely been waged at the retail channel (service stations). This endeavour to improve on service quality has preoccupied the key players to the extent that some of the companies such as Total and Caltex have outsourced mystery shopper companies to assess on a quarterly basis the level of quality service in their stations and also benchmark competition using the same parameters (Total Top service report, 2001).


From the investigations by the study, there is evidence that no study had so far been done to investigate the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing. This study therefore will focus on the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika district. In this respect, it will look at the quality of service as one of
the key attractions and determinant of choice by consumers in Petroleum retailing and attempt to
gauge the extent of this influence.

Objectives of the study

General Objective
The main objective of the study was to assess the influence of service quality on consumer
preference in petroleum retailing.

Specific Objectives
i. To determine the influence of reliability on consumer preference in petroleum retailing
ii. To establish the extent to which responsiveness influences consumer choice of petroleum
    retailing.
iii. To identify the influence of assurance on consumer preference of petroleum retailing.
iv. To investigate the influence of tangibles on the choice of petroleum retailing.

Justification of the study
The study will be of benefit to researchers and scholars in the field of marketing with specific
reference to service quality in petroleum retailing, since it will form background to any further
research in this area. This study will also be useful to practitioners of marketing and particularly
those in petroleum retailing, since it shall enable them set programs in their retail channel aimed
at addressing quality service improvements if this is a key determinant to consumer choice.
The study will benefit investors in the petroleum retail channel who shall be able to gauge and
give priority to the level of investment and commitment they need to put in terms of attracting
consumers through service quality. Consumers will also benefit from the study since the results
shall enable the industry to come up with programmes that aim at giving value to consumers
through quality service. The current research may help petroleum retailers to understand
customer’s preferences by measuring the service quality through its dimensions. The retailers
could use the study findings to collect data about their consumers’ perception in order to make strategic decisions.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to the respondents who were selected from a target population of staff working at the petroleum retailers in Thika. The researcher issued the data collection instruments which will be collected later. This gave the respondents adequate time to fill the questionnaires. Some employees did not answer all the questions in the questionnaire while others have not tried at all. Some feared that their responses may be accessed by their supervisors hence failed to response honestly. The researcher mainly engaged the respondents in a brief interview before issuing the questionnaires as a strategy to avoid lack of cooperation.

**Literature review**

This study analyzed literature related to service quality on consumer preference. It attempted to identify the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika district.

**Theoretical literature review**

**Theory of Exchange Relation**

Bagozzi (1974) formulated the theorem of the exchange relation stating that, market transactions happen as soon as both customer and company expect to gain value by engaging in exchange. All relationships have a give and take, although the balance of this exchange is not always equal. Social Exchange theory explains how we feel about a relationship with another person as depending on our perceptions of the balance between what we put into the relationship and what we get out of it, the kind of relationship deserved and the chances of having a better relationship with someone else. In deciding what is fair, we develop a comparison level against which we compare the give/take ratio. This level will vary between relationships, with some
being more giving and others where we get more from the relationship. They will also vary greatly in what is given and received.

To some extent, the Nordic schools draw on the same argument, as they perceive social or economic networks as the fertile ground for the cultivation of economic value. We refer to these streams of research as the context perspective of relationship marketing. The common denominator of these different research traditions is that they perceive social, economic or institutional networks as the relevant context for the creation of value. The decisive characteristic of relationships, in this perspective, is that by investing in relationships, companies can improve their position and establish favorable market exchanges. This theory instigates research question one: Does reliability influence the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing?

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties. Social exchange theory posits that all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. The theory has roots in economics, psychology and sociology (Miller, 2005).

Social exchange theory is tied to rational choice theory and on the other hand to structuralism, and features many of their main assumptions. American sociologist George Caspar Homans is usually credited with the consolidation of the foundations of Social Exchange Theory. Homans’s article entitled “Social Behavior as Exchange” (Knapp, 1978) is viewed as the seminal work on this theory. Works by Richard Emerson, Peter M. Blau (Murstein, Cerreto, and MacDonald,
1977), are also important and often reference Homans, as do many other articles and books on the subject.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory has a long and rich history in the field of psychology and social psychology. It has made important contributions simply because it attempts to account for and explain everyday explanations that bring order and predictability to a world that might not otherwise be orderly and predictable (Heider, 1958). Attribution theory (which is actually a group of theories) is all about explanations of “why.” “Why am I being ignored?” Attribution theory attempts to understand how people explain and account for causality. It is based upon the premise that individuals are seldom passive observers of events and behavior (Shaver & Scott, 1991). Rather, they are active perceivers searching for the reasons accounting for what they observe. It classifies attributions according to two fundamental types: External or situational attributions that account for causality by assigning responsibility to external factors (e.g., the weather). Internal or dispositional attributions answer the “why” question by assigning responsibility to the person (Woolfolk, 2007). In practice, these two perspectives can produce different research focuses. The first can produce research that addresses control, management, and environmental issues. The second can produce examination of issues related to personality and self-worth. But, this perspective can also produce keen insights related to control, e.g., self-control and behavior change (Vockell and Edward, 2001).

Weiner (1974) focused his attribution theory on achievement. He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most important factors affecting attributions for achievement. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The locus of control dimension has two poles: internal versus external locus of
control. The stability dimension captures whether causes change over time or not. For instance, ability can be classified as a stable, internal cause, and effort classified as unstable and internal. Controllability contrasts causes one can control, such as skill/efficacy, from causes one cannot control, such as aptitude, mood, others’ actions, and luck. Sales promotion is a short term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). They state that sales promotion is found everywhere e.g. a free standing insert in the Sunday newspaper contains offering, email offer free shipping on your text purchase. They argue that sales promotion objectives vary widely, that is seller may use consumer promotion to increase short-term sales. This theory instigates research question three: How does assurance influence consumer choice in petroleum retailing?

**Conceptual Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Consumer Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Critical Review**

A study conducted by Helsinki Regional Transport (2012), found that there are numerous ways to improve the reliability of public transport like improving the punctuality of service among others. However, this study focuses on the transport sector in Finland, a developed country. The current study however seeks to review the petroleum industry. This study therefore failed to enrich the current study.
A study by Tsui, (2005) on reputational effectiveness found that responsiveness characterizes one person's behavior during an interaction with a target person. However, the study was carried out in Asia and thus the results cannot be duplicated to suit a developing country in Africa.

O'Neill and Palmer (2004) in their study revealed that providing product warranties enhances consumers’ perception of unobservable service quality. The study also revealed that consumers reason that since the firm is willing to stand behind its product, it must be of a higher quality. The study however, dwelt on issuing warranties (i.e. for electronic appliances) for assurance purposes while the current study seeks to review assurance from a petroleum retailer.

A study by Zeithaml et al. (2006) found that physical evidence is used as a cue due to the intangibility of services. The cues show the consumer an external image or tangible aspect of the service. Rust, Zahorik and Keinigham (1995) reveal that first impression occurs when the customer comes into the facility to conduct business. The facility must be seen from the customer's point of view, and all staff should be alert to avoid or remove customer-perceived blemishes (Rust et al, 1994). However relevant these studies are to the current study, they were carried in developed countries thus leaving room for a similar study to be carried in Kenya

Summary and Research Gaps
A lot of research had not been done on service quality on consumer preference; however, many organizations suffered from customer defection because they fail to implement the very basic services and customer satisfaction to ensure long term customer loyalty. Hence the literature had reviewed the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika District.

Based on the research findings and the literature review the researcher asserts that none of the information available resembles the research work on influence of service quality on consumer
preference in petroleum retailing in Thika district. The researcher determined the variables such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and found out that all those areas have been determined only that the earlier researchers did not assess how such factors influence service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika district. Therefore out of all the research information obtained, none of the researchers had studied the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika district. It’s therefore important to analyze, find out, and recommend how the service quality on consumer preference can be improved and give suggestion for further studies.

**Methodology**

The nature of this research was a descriptive survey. Descriptive research is suitable for this study since it is ideal in situations where some key aspects of the subject are known and hence it helps to generate more detailed information regarding the key aspects of the subject (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000).

The area of study had a total population of twenty seven (27) petrol service stations from both the multinationals and the independent dealers type (17 multinational branded stations and 10 various independent dealer stations). These stations were spread across the area of study with the majority in the urban centres of Thika, Ruiru, Juja and Gatundu. From each petroleum retailer, the study selected 2 top level managers, 3 middle level managers and 4 low level management staff.

Respondents were drawn from all the petroleum retailing stations composed of 17 multinational stations and 10 independent dealer stations. Sampling method was employed because the stations are situated in distant and diverse locations within the area of study. The reason for a greater percentage for the multinational stations was based on the heavy patronage of the multinational
stations compared to the independent dealer stations. In each of the stations, the sample size was further stratified into three strata of the management levels so as to get a complete picture from the petroleum retailers. The researcher categorized the management staff into top, middle and low level management staff. The sample size was presented in table 3.2 below.

The study collected both primary and secondary data for the purpose of assessing the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing.

Primary data was collected using a questionnaire. Data collection involved a self-administered questionnaire. The researcher dropped the questionnaires physically at the respondents’ place of work to be collected at a later date. Each questionnaire was coded and only the researcher knew which person responded. The coding technique was used for the purpose of matching the completed and returned questionnaires with those delivered to the respondents. Secondary data was obtained from journals, e-resources, books and other past published scholarly articles relevant to the study.

Findings and Discussions

Reliability

The study found out that majority of the respondents indicated that reliability affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that they rated the extent to which reliability affected choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing as very high.

The respondents strongly agreed that reliability was a component of trust in automated systems and that reliability was an important component of technology expectations, performance, and disconfirmation. The respondents agreed that reliability was the most important service quality attribute. They agreed that there must be incentives for operators to encourage them to improve
the reliability of services. Finally, the respondents indicated that in the program to improve the reliability only the key factors were presented.

These findings are in line with the literature review where Metters et al (2006) argue that service processes have different performance requirements than those of production processes because of their characteristics.

**Responsiveness**

The study further found out that majority of the respondents indicated that responsiveness affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that they rated the extent to which responsiveness affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing as very high. The respondents strongly agreed that the maxims of relevance and manner were useful for the study of responsiveness in service interactions. The respondents strongly agreed that when customers enter into a service interaction with an organization, they usually require responsiveness and that responsive service interactions include the consistency between talk and behavior. The respondents agreed that to ensure timely access to easy-to-understand service information, organizations strived to enhance responsiveness. Finally, the respondents agreed that responsiveness characterized a person's behavior during an interaction with a target person.

These findings are in line with the literature review where Kikuchi (2001), found that listeners who adapted their rate of back channeling (minor, supportive responses such as uh huh and head nodding) to the speaker were rated more positively than those who did not. Based on these findings, a customer should respond favorably to a service representative who adapted the form and content of his speech to that of the customer. This favorable response will influence service quality. Based on the general preference for coordinated interactions, the service representatives have a positive reaction to the coordinated interaction.
Assurance

Additionally, the study found out that majority of the respondents indicated that assurance affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that they rated the extent to which assurance affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing as very high. The respondents strongly agreed that providing product warranties enhanced consumers’ perception of unobservable service quality assurance. The respondents strongly agreed that consumers judged a service provider based on cues that they encountered as they shop, that consumers reasoned that since the firm was willing to stand behind its product, it must be of a higher quality and that service assurance involved a solution that contained tools to obtain accurate, detailed and timely data. Finally the respondents agreed that gaining the customer’s trust was important for a service provider in order to reduce the customer’s perceived level of risk ex ante.

These findings are in line with the literature review where Parasuraman et al. (1998) postulates that assurance is the ability to convey trust and confidence.

Tangibles

Finally, the study found out that majority of the respondents indicated that tangibles affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that they rated the extent to which tangibles affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing as very high. The respondents strongly agreed that physical evidence was used as a cue due to the intangibility of services and that the cues showed the consumer an external image or tangible aspect of the service. The respondents agreed that a first impression situation that was difficult to control occurred when the customer comes into the facility to conduct business. The respondents agreed
that physical evidence was the environment that enabled the organization to provide the service and communicate to consumers. Finally, the respondents indicated that the facility must be seen from the customer's point of view, and all staff should be alert to avoid customer-perceived blemishes.

These findings collate with the literature review where Reimer and Kuehn (2005) argue that physical evidence thus includes all aspects of the service provider’s physical facilities, as well as other forms of communication with the patient, including facility exterior, facility interior and other tangibles.

**Regression analysis**

This section presents a discussion of the results of inferential statistics. The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis so as to investigate the influence of service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika District. The researcher applied the statistical package SPSS to code, enter and compute the measurements of the multiple regressions for the study. Findings are presented in the following tables;

**Table 1: Model Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.746a</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td>.494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Research, 2012**

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles

b. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

Coefficient of determination explains the extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be explained by the change in the independent variables or the percentage of variation in the
dependent variable (Service Quality) that is explained by all the 4 independent variables (Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles).

The four independent variables that were studied, explain 86.9% of variance in service quality as represented by the $R^2$. This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 13.1% of variance in the dependent variable. Therefore, further research should be conducted to investigate into the other factors that influence service quality on consumer preference in petroleum retailing in Thika District.

Table 2: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>5.239</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>.001a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>50.345</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55.584</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research, 2012

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles

b. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

The F critical at 5% level of significance was 3.54. Since $F$ calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 16.0), this shows that the overall model was significant. The significance is less than 0.05, thus indicating that the predictor variables, (Reliability, Responsiveness, assurance, Tangibles). Explain the variation in the dependent variable which is service quality. Consequently, we reject the hypothesis that all the population values for the regression coefficients are 0. Conversely, if the significance value of $F$ was larger than 0.05 then the independent variables would not explain the variation in the dependent variable.
Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.631</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>3.253</td>
<td>0.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>0.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>2.867</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>1.354</td>
<td>0.566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher (2012)

From the regression findings, the substitution of the equation \( Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 \) becomes:

\[ Y = 3.631 + 3.253 X_1 + 1.133 X_2 + 2.867 X_3 + 1.354 X_4. \]

Where \( Y \) is the dependent variable (service quality), \( X_1 \) is reliability variable, \( X_2 \) is responsiveness variable, \( X_3 \) is assurance variable and \( X_4 \) is the tangibles variable.

According to the equation, taking all factors (Reliability, Responsiveness, assurance, Tangibles) constant at zero, service quality will be 3.631. The data findings also show that a unit increase in reliability variable will lead to a 3.253 increase in service quality; a unit increase in responsiveness will lead to a 1.133 increase in service quality; a unit increase in assurance will lead to a 2.867 increase in service quality and a unit increase in tangibles variable will lead to a 1.354 in service quality. This means that the most significant factor is reliability followed by tangibles.
At 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence, reliability had a 0.001 level of significance; responsiveness had a 0.003, assurance had a 0.002 level of significance and tangibles had a 0.004 level of significance, implying that the most significant factor is reliability followed by assurance.

**Regression Analysis**

In addition, the researcher conducted a linear multiple regression analysis so as to test the relationship among variables (independent) on the operational productivity of oil marketing firms. The researcher applied the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) to code, enter and compute the measurements of the multiple regressions for the study.

**Conclusion**

**Reliability**

The study concludes that reliability affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that reliability was a component of trust in automated systems and that reliability is an important component of technology expectations, performance, and disconfirmation. The study concludes that reliability was the most important service quality attribute and that organizations must grant incentives to operators to encourage them to improve the reliability of services.

**Responsiveness**

The study also concludes that that responsiveness affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that the maxims of relevance and manner were useful for the study of responsiveness in service interactions. The study concludes that when customers enter into a service interaction with an organization, they usually require responsiveness and that responsive service interactions include the consistency between talk and behavior.

**Assurance**

Additionally, the study concludes that assurance affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that providing product warranties enhanced consumers’ perception of
unobservable service quality assurance. The study concludes that consumers judged a service provider based on cues that they encountered as they shop, that consumers reasoned that since the firm was willing to stand behind its product, it must be of a higher quality and that service assurance involved a solution that contained tools to obtain accurate, detailed and timely data.

**Tangibles**

Finally, the study concludes that tangibles affected the choice of consumer choice of petroleum retailing and that physical evidence was used as a cue due to the intangibility of services and that the cues showed the consumer an external image or tangible aspect of the service. The study concludes that physical evidence is the environment that enables the organization to provide the service and communicate to consumers.

**Recommendations**

**Reliability**

The study recommends that the personnel in the retailing department should attend various training sessions to be competent enough to handle the present challenges like in the business world; this needs a lot of improvement in order to increase service delivery in petroleum industries.

**Responsiveness**

The study also recommends that an organization should take various steps to improve its responsiveness and its customer service capabilities. These can be done through respecting customers' viewpoints in striving to deliver product quality and customer service that exceed their expectations.

**Assurance**
Additionally, the study recommends that cases of fraud and corruption which lead to inefficiency in most of the operations (service delivery) in the petroleum industries should be eliminated.

**Tangibles**

Finally, the study recommends that petroleum retailers should invest in a strong strategic reward management team so as to ensure that the staff is rewarded in accordance with their value to the industry by giving them monetary incentives which are needed to encourage staff to put extra effort so as to achieve fairness.

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