Citizen Report Card as a Social Accountability Tool towards Customer Satisfaction

Marni bt Ghazali [a b], Haris Abd Wahab[b]

[a] Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 70300 Kampus Seremban 3, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia
marni_pj@yahoo.com

[b] Department of Administration and Social Justice, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
haris@um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Making public services more accountable and responsive to the needs and expectations of citizens could improve public service delivery. Thus, this study aims to identify the level of customer satisfaction in relation to service received. Secondly is to identify the level of implementation of the citizen report cards used and lastly to examine the effect of citizen report cards used on customers' satisfaction at one of the Malaysian government agency. The target population is service users. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire to 400 service users specifically at one of the government agency in Selangor. The main analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics in order to achieve the research objectives of the study. The findings from the study revealed that the level of customer satisfaction in relation to service received is at moderately high, while the level of implementation of the citizen report cards used is also at moderately high. Results also confirmed that the use of citizen report cards was significantly related to customer satisfaction, produces positive but very weak relationship with customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study findings provide significant insights especially to government agency to devote on continuous improvement and development with regards to the use of citizen report cards and its impact on customers' satisfaction in relation to public service delivery.

Keywords: *Citizen report cards, Social Accountability, Customer Satisfaction, Government Agency*

INTRODUCTION

It is now encouraging to see a growing local literature on social accountability such as in Pakistan and South Asia (Abbas and Ahmed, 2014). In fact, a growing body of evidence shows that social accountability efforts on the part of citizens and civil society organizations can serve to create new effective vertical mechanisms of accountability and to strengthen internal mechanisms of accountability (Ravindra, 2004). Referring to World Bank (2004), social accountability can be defined as an "approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, in which it is ordinary citizens or civil society organizations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability".

Furthermore, past experiences of social accountability practices have shown that this intervention leads to improvements in government programs and services (World Development Report, 2004). For example, citizens' participation in policy making and planning process can lead to the development of programs that better reflect citizen priorities and better adapted to their needs. Moreover, having citizens monitoring can ensure the rationale use of resources, provide safeguard against misuse of resources and citizens evaluation can provide feedback on shortcomings and propose corrective action (WDR, 2004).

In recent years, more attention is given to improve governance and public service delivery through public participation. Nevertheless, there is little credible evidence on the impact of policy interventions such as social accountability tools that involved people participation in monitoring and evaluation of public service delivery (Ravindra, 2004). This is due to the fact that most comprehensive community monitoring initiatives have not been rigorously evaluated (Ravindra, 2004). In fact, few studies relying on rigorous impact evaluation strategies such as citizen report cards, have not evaluated more comprehensive attempts to inform and involve the citizens in monitoring public officials (Bjorkman and Svensson, 2006).

Besides, Joshi (2010) pointed out that no systematic studies of the citizen report cards impact on services have been done. In fact, as highlighted by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME, 2013), there was an issue regarding weak and absent citizen government monitoring mechanism at the service delivery level (DPME, 2013). However, in many countries a range of social accountability tools has been developed to improve citizens or customers' feedback to service providers. Among others include citizen report cards, complaint procedure and client exit surveys (Brown, Hughes and Midgley, 2008).

Therefore, due to this background, this study attempts to identify the level of customer satisfaction in relation to the service received, to identify the level of implementation of the citizen report cards used and lastly to examine the effect of citizen report cards used on customers' satisfaction at Road Transport Department, Malaysia.

However, in the context of Road Transport Department, the term citizen report cards refers to "customer feedback forms". Hence, throughout the discussion in this paper the term citizen report cards was used interchangeably with "customer feedback forms" as used at RTD in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In many developing countries, public service delivery is regarded as ineffective, cumbersome, too many procedures, red taped, not transparent, slow in decision making and others (Tamrakar, 2010). In fact, they cannot meet customer satisfaction because of weak incentives for public officials to deliver services efficiently (OECD, 2001). All these create the frustration, feeling of dissatisfaction among citizens towards government. The growing dissatisfaction with the performance of the public sector with regards to service delivery has given more attention on ways to improve the quality of service delivery by the public sector (Tamrakar, 2010).

In the context of public service organization, Malaysian government has introduced Development Administrative Circular (DAC 2/2005) as a performance indicators to measure the performance of public service agencies in terms of (i) the efficiency and effectiveness of the process of service delivery, (ii) human resource and financial productivity, and (iii) customer satisfaction towards the service received (DAC 2/2005). Additionally, even a lot of reforms undertook by Malaysian government in order to improve the weaknesses of public service delivery, nevertheless, the implementation of the reforms such as New Public Management (NPM) has not led to significant changes (Khalid, 2008).

According to Selvanathan *et al.,* (2016), despite NPM emphasis on the relationship between a management strategy and the need for democratic accountability. Surprisingly, a recent study carried out by Selvanathan *et al.,* (2016) in three Malaysian government agencies found that customers are not satisfied with the services given by the government agencies (RMP, NRD, PWD). In fact, there is no significant improvement has been done even though the problems of service delivery has been raised frequently. The worst thing is whenever there are problems, finger pointing precedes any efforts to solve them. Consequently, there is no solution found even many steps were taken by various parties (Selvanathan *et al.,* 2016).

Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Modern management science philosophy considers customer satisfaction as a baseline standard of performance and a possible standard of excellence for any business organization (Gerson, 1993). In fact, a growing number of companies choose customer satisfaction as their main performance indicator by reinforcing customers' orientation on a day-to-day basis (Mihelis *et al.,* 2001). Customer satisfaction can be experienced in a various situations and connected to both goods and services. It is a highly personal assessment that is greatly affected by customer expectations. In fact, satisfaction also based on customer's experience for both contact with the organization and personal outcomes (Hanan *et al.,* 1989) cited in Cengiz (2010).

According to Jones and Sesser (1995), providing customers with outstanding value may be the only reliable way to achieve sustained customer satisfaction. In fact, firms must realize that different actions are required to convert neutral customers to satisfied customers than to convert satisfied customers into completely satisfied customers (Jones and Sesser, 1995). This is due to the facts that when individuals used a service, they are influenced by the service providers and the quality of experience or encounter they have with the service provider (Norudin and Hamdan, 2010).

However, Wallace and Pulford (2006), stated that customers are not fully able to change the service providers, but there is always a ways that enable them to change the public service and public sector organizations through getting feedback on how well the public service perform. Hence, it is very important for service providers to give customers a "voice" and "listen to their opinions" (Wallace and Pulford, 2006).There are many ways for example through a customer satisfaction survey, consultations, user panels and others (Wallace and Pulford, 2006)

Citizen Report Cards (Customer Feedback Forms) and Its Relation to Customer Satisfaction

In many countries, citizen report cards are used as performance monitoring and also feedback mechanism to evaluate different service providers based on users perspectives (Peter, 2011). In fact, citizen survey such as citizen report cards is the most common method to measure preferences and satisfaction. It is also known as one outcome measure of service performance available to public managers (Kelly, 2003). This mechanism makes service providers more accountable to the citizens. According to Peter (2011), the Public Affairs Centre, in Bangalore, India has become a world leader in applying citizen report cards in Bangalore's public agencies in the year 1994 (Peter, 2011). In fact, Public Affairs Centre has introduced this mechanism on several others cities, rural services and also to specific sector services such as health care (Peter, 2011).

A study made by Bjorkman and Svensson (2006) shows citizen report cards has increased the quality and quantity of health service provision and resulted in improved health outcomes. For example, the use of citizen report cards has improved the treatment communities significantly and more extensively. The most important is, the study suggests that the changes in the quality and quantity of health care provision are due to the changes in staff behavior as a result of citizen report cards (Bjorkman and Svensson, 2006).

Referring to United Nation Report (2007), citizen report cards (CRC) not only affect public satisfaction with service improvement, but most importantly it can reduce the incidence of corruption in relation to public sector accountability. Moreover, in line with this UN Report, Asian Development Bank (2007) also has indicates that the citizen report cards provide a simple but powerful way to measure citizens' satisfaction level with respect to the service quality provided by municipalities. It was suggested that citizens' report cards should be conducted on a regular basis with the aim to highlight any areas of improvement or to identify any services that need to be improved (ADB, 2007). Thus, the following hypothesis was developed as follows:

H1: Customer Feedback Forms (citizen report cards) has significant relationship with customer satisfaction

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey method through cross-sectional study using individuals as the unit of analysis. The target population of this study is the service users of Road Transport Department, Malaysia. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, only 384 were usable for data analysis. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires through simple random sampling technique. In this study, the independent variable (IV) is customer feedback forms (citizen report cards) whereas customer satisfaction serves as the dependent variable (DV). There ae ten items to measure IV that waere developed based on literature (see Ackerman, (2005), Paul and Thampi (2007), Ahmad (2008), Malena *et al*., (2004), Taylor *et al.,* (2008), these items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree". Meanwhile for customer satisfaction construct, it had 37 items and it was measured in terms of five main elements of satisfaction namely, delivery, timeliness, information, staff attitude and professionalism (MORI/Cabinet Office, 2004). This study employs 5-point Likert scale to measure the items ranging from "1= very dissatisfied" to "5= very satisfied". In terms of data analysis, descriptive analysis was carried out by looking at the mean score and standard deviation to identify the level of customer satisfaction and the level of implementation of customer feedback forms used respectively. This was followed by inferential statistics to look at Pearson correlation. The simple linear

regression analysis was used to examine the relationship and the effect between IV and DV. The data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Normality, Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

In this study, normality test was carried as it was deemed as a prerequisite for many inferential statistics. As stated by Hair *et al.,* (2006), normality test is the degree to which the distribution of the sample data corresponds to a normal distribution. It is known as the most fundamental assumption in multivariate analysis. For this study, the test for normality was carried out using statistical analyses known as Skewness and Kurtosis as shown in Table 1.0 as below:-

Table 1.0
Results of Normality Test

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
Citizen report cards (IV) (customer feedback forms)	-1.28	1.88
Customer satisfaction (DV)	-.873	.282

Table 1.0 shows that all the variables were at the acceptance level of normality. This is because each dimension of independent and dependent variables fall within the range of -2 and +2 and not exceed +/-2.0 respectively. For citizen report cards, the value of skewness and kurtosis is -1.28 and 1.88 respectively, while customer satisfaction, the value of skewness and kurtosis is -.873 and .282 respectively. According to Field (2009), in a large sample, normality test can be significant even when the scores are only slightly different from a normal distribution.

Besides that, all items for both variables (IV and DV) were tested for its validity. Before proceeding with the factor analysis, two statistical measurements need to be checked namely the Bartlett test (Bartlett, 1954) and the sampling accuracy measurement, Kaiser-Myer-Olkin (KMO) (Kaiser, 1970). The Bartlett test should be significant with the p-value < 0.05 of the data and the index range of KMO is between 0 and 1. While, a value of 0.6 (p > 0.6) suggests the minimum value for good analysis. Table 2.0 indicates the result of validity analysis as below:

Table 2.0

Results of Validity Analysis

Independent Variable	Value	Dependent Variable	Value
	.680	KMO index of Sampling Adequacy	.891
KMO index of Sampling Adequacy			
Approx.Chi-Square	1498.44	Approx.Chi-Square	15245.560
Barlett's Test Spherecity (df)	45	Barlett's Test Spherecity (df)	666
Sig	.000	Sig	.000

As shown on Table 2.0, the KMO value for IV was .68 which ws more than adequate that is point of reference at >.060 (Hair *et al.,* 2006). The Barlett's test for spherecity was sufficiently large (x^2 (45)= 1498.44, p<.001). Meanwhile, KMO value for DV was .891, and Barlett's test for spherecity was sufficiently large (x^2 (666) = 15245.560, p<.001) indicating that the correlation matrices for both IV and DV items were not identical matrices (Field, 2011 & Hair *et al.,* 2010).

All items were tested for its reliability as shown in Table 3.0. The Cronbach's Alpha of reliability was used for internal consistency and stability of the research structure.

Table 3.0

Results of Reliability Analysis

Variable	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Independent variable Citizen report cards (customer feedback forms)	10	0.78
Dependent variable Customer satisfaction	37	0.93

In this study, the value of Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.70 and this value exceeded the minimum cut-off point suggested by Nunally and Bernstein (1994). Thus, all the vaariables were reliable between the range of 0.78 – 0.93 respectively. As a result, all the requirements for further analysis has been met and could proceed for further analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.0 below depicts the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their gender and age.

Table 4.0
Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	247	64.3
	Female	137	35.7
Age	20 - 24 years old	105	27.3
	25 - 29 years old	88	22.9
	30 - 34 years old	127	33.1
	35 - 39 years old	43	11.2
	More than 40 years old	21	5.5

As shown on Table 4.0, the respondents of the study consisted of 247 (64.3%) were male, whereas 137 (35.7%) were female. Therefore, this study shows most of the respondents are represented by male. The largest group (33.1%) included respondents between 30 to 34 years old, followed by those whose ages are between 20 to 24 years old (27.3%). Those whose ages between 25 to 29 years old accounted for (22.9%) of the whole population, while those whose ages 35 to 39 accounted for only (11.2%) and (5.5%) belong to the age group of more than 40 years old.

Level of Customer Satisfaction

In this study, descriptive analysis was carried out by looking at the mean score and standard deviation in order to identify the level of customer satisfaction based on service users perspectives at RTD, Selangor. Table 5.0 presents the results of the study as below:

Table 5.0
Level of Customer Satisfaction

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Level
Customer Satisfaction	2.00	5.00	3.53	2.75	Moderately High

Table 5.0 indicates that the overall level of customer satisfaction is moderately high with the mean score of customer satisfaction (M = 3.53, SD = 2.75). Thus, as suggested by Nunally (1978), the mean score between the range of 3.01 – 4.00 is at the moderately high. Overall, the study findings revealed that the level of customers satisfaction in relation to services received is moderately high at RTD Selangor.

Level of Implementation of Customer Feedback Forms (Citizen Report Cards)

In order to identify the level of implementation of customer feedback forms (citizen report cards) used, descriptive analysis was conducted by looking at the mean score and standard deviation of the variable. Table 6.0 indicates the result of descriptive analysis.

Table 6.0
The Level of Implementation of Customer Feedback Forms (Citizen Report Cards)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Level
Customer feedback forms (citizen report cards)	3.00	4.40	3.82	0.30	Moderately High

As shown on Table 6.0, the study finding revealed that the level of implementation of the customer feedback forms used particularly at RTD is at moderately high. This can be seen with mean value of customer feedback forms indicates (M = 3.82; SD = 0.30). Therefore, Nunally (1978) and Stufflebeam (1972) suggested that the mean score between the range of 3.01–4.00 required incremental changes for the purposes of development and continuous improvement with regards to any programs or any reforms undertook by organization. Based on the study findings, apparently it shows that RTD has to undertake incremental changes for customer feedback forms used for the purpose of development and continuous improvement as suggested by (Nunally; 1978 and Stufflebeam, 1972) especially at RTD. Based on the study finding, it seems to suggest that RTD has to revisit comprehensively the way RTD implemented customer feedback forms as a tool in order to achieve the maximum level of customers' satisfaction especially with regards to public service delivery.

The Relationship between Customer Feedback Forms (Citizen Report Cards) and Customer Satisfaction

As shown in Table 7.0, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient *r* was carried out to examine the relationship between customer feedback forms and customer's satisfaction level of the respondents. The findings reveals that, a customer feedback form has very weak and positive significant relationship with customers' satisfaction level (r = .144) and the significance value is less than 0.01, (p < .01) (see Table 7.0).

Table 7.0

Pearson's Correlation between Customer Feedback Forms and Customer's Satisfaction Level

Variable		Customer feedback forms	Customer satisfaction
Customer feedback forms	Pearson Correlation	1	.144**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.144**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	384	384

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hence, the study finding shows that there is a significance relationship between customers feedback forms with customers satisfaction. As a result, the formulated hypothesis H1 was fully supported. Thus, the study finding suggests that, if the use of customer feedback forms is effective, the customer's satisfaction level also will be increase especially at RTD. In other words, both variables (customer feedback forms and customer's satisfaction level) move in the same direction when there is a positive correlation.

Subsequently, the simple linear regression analysis was executed between customer feedback form and customer satisfaction to further examine the relationship between variables.

Table 8.0

Summary of Regression Analysis between Customer Feedback Forms (Citizen Report Cards) and Customer's Satisfaction

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Customer satisfaction	Customer feedback forms (citizen report cards)	.144	.021	.018

Table 8.0 presents the result of simple linear regression analysis between customer feedback forms and customer satisfaction. Surprisingly, the study finding revealed that customers' feedback forms only explains 2.1% of the customer satisfaction construct. Thus, such findings imply that there are many other factors (97.9%) that need to be addressed in tackling the issues of customer satisfaction particularly at RTD. Hence for this reason, customer feedback forms could only be deemed as one of the many factors that contribute to customer satisfaction level particularly at RTD. According to Ravindra (2004), one of the significant issues that

emerges from the use of citizen report cards was due to lack of information which became a serious barrier that limit citizens' access to the public services.

In fact, Paul and Tampi (2007) stated that without enough space for participation, citizen report cards are possible to make an impact. Not only that, as highlighted by Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (2013), even though most public services have customer satisfaction surveys, but the accountability and responsiveness to citizens were found to be weak and the systematic use of information from these tools such as satisfaction surveys for improvement was poor (DPME, 2013). Hence, Paul and Thampi (2007) suggested that a report card did not end with the survey and its publication, but it must be followed by further action through organized advocacy supports, including civic engagement and develop two-way interaction and dialogues with the relevant public agencies (Paul and Thampi, 2007).

Thus, the current study findings imply that serious efforts must be taken by Malaysian public agencies such as RTDs to revisit the implementation of customer feedback forms and pay a greater attention with regards to social accountability initiatives, transparency and responsiveness. In addition, the focus should be on customer orientation approach in their service operation and delivery in order to understand the customer needs and expectations in relation to services rendered by service providers. Therefore, based on the abovementioned implication drawn from the current study findings, the researchers suggest that future research should be extended to other Malaysian government agencies with regards to the implementation of social accountability tools. Since the current study has concentrated on one government agency only. Besides, it is also suggested that future research should consider other possible variables. With that, it is hope the new findings may be able to provide better insights with regards to social accountability practices in relations to customer satisfaction especially in public sector in Malaysia.

Conclusion

Based on the simple linear regression analysis, surprisingly the study finding revealed that only 2.1% of the variance in customer satisfaction was explained by customer feedback forms (citizen report cards). Thus, the current study finding seems to highlight that there is no strong support received between the use of customer feedback forms and customer satisfaction. With this regards, the findings provide an important indicator and attention especially to the top management of Road Transport Department to pay a greater attention regarding the implementation and the effect of customer feedback forms used in order to achieve the maximum level of customer satisfaction. Besides that, the study finding indicate that the implementation level of customer feedback forms at the mean score between the range of 3.01–4.00 required incremental

changes for the purposes of development and continuous improvement with regards to any programs or reforms or approaches undertook by organization. This is due to the fact that, customer feedback forms (citizen report cards) can be a very good tool to benchmark public services over a period of time to measure the changes taking place as a result of reforms that emerge from the finding of the customer feedback forms (citizen report cards). Most importantly, the use of the customer feedback forms (citizen report cards) is not only as a means of collecting customer feedback on existing situations from citizens. It also provides a means for testing out different options that citizens wish to implement, either individually or collectively to tackle current problems.

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