Analysing the Level of Co-Ordination in a Hospitality Concern: A Case Study of Zimbabwe Parks Authority (Zimparks) Lodges.

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Abstract: The study aimed at measuring the level of co-ordination in Zimparks lodges. There is lack of internal coordination to achieve a smooth flow of service delivery. The research design followed a cross sectional survey of 207 respondents who include Zimparks visitors, employees and management. Coordination levels within Zimparks lodges had few positive aspects as compared to negative ones since management and employees had general laxity to interact regularly to solve customer needs.

Keywords: Co -ordination, market orientation, customer satisfaction

Introduction
Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) is a parastatal which is failing to meet its operational targets in terms of customer reach, financial results and general productivity. The Authority’s lodges include Chivero, Matopos, Hwange, Nyanga, Victoria Falls, and Kyle and other units located in various tourist attraction centres. All the lodges have not been doing well signalling something is wrong with the entities marketing efforts.

Perreault and McCarthy, (2002) defined marketing orientation as trying to carry out and implement the marketing concept. Instead of just trying to get customers to buy what the firm has produced, a market-oriented firm tries to offer customers what they need. Three basic ideas are included in the definition of the marketing concept, namely; (1) customer satisfaction, (2) a total company effort, (3) and profitability. These ideas deserve more discussion for us to get some insight on how to improve the Zimparks lodges operations and its market orientation culture.

This study aims to look at the level of total company effort that is being exerted at Zimparks to better satisfy customer needs.

Literature review
Co-ordination Effort as a Market Orientation Culture
Tomaskova (2009), on current methods of measurement of market orientation said inter-functional co-ordination is a critical starting point for achieving improvement in the company’s operations. The issues emphasised by Tomaskova (2009) include employee’s knowledge of competencies and responsibilities, worker alignment to corporate objectives, team work and mutual co-operation, close relationships between superiors and subordinates, and exchange of information among individual departments. Kumar, Subramanian and Sandholm (2002) recommended the inclusion of the following statements in measuring the extent to which co-ordinated services marketing effort is applied. These include having service units working together to meet customers’ needs, service units sharing business information, having integrated strategies between different service units, service units working together to offer value, and different service units sharing resources with each other. Having a well knitted, co-ordinated, internally networked and integrated service organisation produces high quality service and consumer satisfaction. Internal co-ordination of employees involves making them maintain some value-creation chains of ‘internal supplier-customer’ nature (Gounaris, 2008). Figure 1 below show the key elements that form a market driven organisation.
Marketing managers must work closely with other company departments. Finance is concerned with finding and using funds to carry out the marketing plan. R&D focuses on the problem of designing safe and attractive product. Purchasing is worried about getting supplies and materials, while manufacturing is responsible for producing the desired number of products. Accounting measures revenues and costs to help marketing know how well it is achieving its objectives. All these departments have an impact on the marketing department’s plan and action (Kotler and Armstrong, 1991). Marketing also need to be vertically co-ordinated with top management for it to get the direction and resources. The key weakness of the above diagram is putting top management at the centre of customer satisfaction matrix. This is, however, solved by the diagram below (Figure 2) which put the marketing function and customer needs at the centre.
The diagram describes the need for the organisation to put customer needs at the heart of its operations. Integration and co-ordination are facilitated by the marketing function which ensures purchasing, human resources, accounts and operations. The questionnaire in this study measured the co-ordinated marketing effort in lodges by testing the level of employee and management interaction when solving customer needs, testing whether various departments, sections and units interact with the marketing function for meeting customer needs, testing whether committees and teams exist for improving customer satisfaction, whether different service units share information and resources with each other willingly, and whether the lodges preferred team work and mutual cooperation.

Table 1: Coordination Levels in Zimparks lodges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower level employees and management interact regularly for solving customers needs</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various departments, sections and units interact regularly with the marketing function for meeting customers’ needs</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are shared values, attitudes and beliefs for meeting customer needs</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are committees and teams for improving customer satisfaction</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different service units share information and resources with each other willingly</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimparks lodges prefer team work and mutual co-operation</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Results (2016)

The Materials and Methods section explains the research methodology, including the use of a cross-sectional survey, the quota sample of 207 respondents, and the reliability of the questionnaire. The Results and Discussion section assesses the level of coordination within Zimparks lodges, highlighting the mean values and their implications.
knowledge of the long time benefits of constant interaction within the organisation. A culture of fear created between management and employees make them fail to cooperate in solving customer problems.

Various Departments, Sections and Units Interact Regularly With the Marketing Function for Meeting Customers’ Needs (Mean=3.34).

Respondents did not concur with the notion that various departments, sections and units within Zimparks lodges interact regularly with the marketing function of meeting customers’ needs. Such units as human resources, marketing, utility and acquisition, and security might be interacting at various levels through emails giving each other monthly updates and reports on actual work done and convening meetings but, customers’ needs could be missing from their agenda. The need for coordinating these functions in a customer oriented manner is critical.

There Are Shared Values, Attitudes and Beliefs for Meeting Customer Needs (Mean=3.17).

There are no perceivable shared values, attitudes and beliefs within Zimparks lodges for meeting customer needs. Such lack might be a result of little or no emphasis on the organisation’s vision and mission. Employees and management need to constantly meet to address issues facing the organisation and give each other platforms to air their beliefs. Issues brought up by customers and clients should not be left to the management to deal with. Other lower level employees might have better and lasting solutions to such issues, and as such, they should be offered a platform to suggest solutions.

There are Committees and Teams for Improving Customer Satisfaction (Mean=3.18).

Respondents denied that there are committees and teams for improving customer satisfaction. Apart from fully functional departments and units, there is an opportunity for Zimparks lodges to set up ad hoc committees and teams whose main focus is on customer satisfaction. Such committees should have membership spanning all the various departments of the organisation. Committees could also be set up to regularly assess the organisation’s customer orientation levels, commitment to customer satisfaction by management, organisation’s employee orientation, coordination levels between employees, the organisation’s competitor orientation and continuous improvement of the services offered by Zimparks lodges. Teams should be set up to monitor how

internal customers differ from external customers and suggest how their differences can be handled.

Different Service Units Share Information and Resources with Each Other Willingly (Mean=2.77).

Various service units within Zimparks lodges share information and resources with each other willingly, but as has been noted above, they seem to lack customer needs aspects in the information they exchange. Resources shared between units include manpower, for example, management has also been doing laundry and cleaning services and rangers doing receipting. Vehicles have also been shared freely among these various units. Information sharing is a critical measure of market orientation especially between departments that directly deal with customers.

Zimparks Lodges Prefer Team Work and Mutual Co-operation (Mean=2.65).

Zimparks lodges have shown a thrust towards team work and all units have demonstrated mutual co-operation in their various activities. This is vital as it generates synergies and the company’s potential is fully realised. Teamwork also offers a democratic platform to problem solving since everyone’s input is valuable to the team. A teamwork approach to problem solving is more powerful since it compares inputs from various individuals as compared to one person giving instructions to the whole group. Teamwork is highly important in the hospitality industry and has been one of Zimparks lodges’ core value in which it has realised many advantages namely, shared ideas, increased efficiency, diversity of skills, improved communication skills, improved problem solving, increased productivity and increased accountability.

Hypothesis Testing: Zimparks’ lodges Coordination Levels

The author carried out a one tailed t-distribution test at 5% significance level and set to reject $H_0$ if $p$-value > 0.05. While the mean value analysis used 3.00 as the benchmark, the hypothesis testing used 2.50 as a more prudent standard for recommending implementation of strategic decision.

$H$: Coordination levels of Zimparks lodges are acceptable.

$H_0$: mean $\leq$ 2.50

$H_a$: mean > 2.50
Table 2: T-Test: One Sample t-test Results for Coordination Levels Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination Levels</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.0217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.26453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Stat (t_{cal})</td>
<td>4.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-Value</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Results (2016)

Since $t_{cal}$ value of 4.832 had p-value of 0.005 which is less than 0.05, we conclude that Zimparks’ coordination levels is generally below the expectation of ‘stakeholder-respondents’ at 5% level of significance. This means that, there is no or less coordination within Zimparks lodges among all departments, sections and units. This also shows that there is no teamwork within Zimparks employees and management. This also shows negative on customer orientation. This also further be concluded that if no immediate action is being taken by management, the organisation will be seen collapsing. All the departments, sections and units should be well coordinated and work as a team and focus on offering good services in line with customer needs and wants during their stay at Zimparks lodges.

Conclusion

Coordination levels within Zimparks lodges had few positive aspects as compared to negative ones. Viewed favourably by customers was Zimparks lodges’ preference of team work and mutual cooperation. In the same light, various service units willingly shared information and resources which impressed customers. On the contrary, customers expressed concern on management and employees’ general laxity to interact regularly to solve customer needs. This was also exacerbated by widespread apathy to interact regularly with a marketing thrust of meeting customer needs. Beliefs, values and attitudes to meet the evolving customer needs were not shared. Missing on the Zimparks lodges were adhoc committees and teams with special focus on meeting customer needs. So deep was the concern by customers that it can be concluded that coordination levels within Zimparks lodges was below par.

References


