MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

CUSTOMER ORIENTATION AND SERVICE QUALITY AMONG NATIONAL WATER AND SEWERAGE CORPORATION (NWSC) CUSTOMERS IN KAMPALA

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL (FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH) IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEGREE OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

PLAN A

DECEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

I Nyadoi Anna do hereby declare to Makerere University Business School that; this dissertation is my own original work and that it has never been submitted for award of an academic in any other University.

Signed..... **Date**.....8th December 2023

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with the approval of my supervisors whose signatures are appended against their respective names below

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Signed..... **Date**.....08/12/2023

DR. AHMAD WALUGEMBE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God Almighty my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program and on His wings only have I soared. I also dedicate this work to my parents; Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Ochwo who have encouraged me all the way, and whose encouragement has made sure that I give it all it takes to finish that which I have started. To my son David Ebun Ochow who has been affected in every way possible by this quest. To my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all your love and support. God bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC). The objectives were; to examine the relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality; assess the relationship between information dissemination and service quality; examine the relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality; and examine relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of NWSC. The study used a cross sectional design with a quantitative approach to data collection. The unit of analysis were NWSC customers in Kampala. A sample size of 395 customers were targeted, and at least 302 customers responded, giving a response rate of 76.5%. To obtain this sample, the researcher applied stratified random sampling technique where NWSC customers were categorized into five groups including; Commercial, Domestic, Institutional, Industrial and Public Stand Posts (PSPs). Later, simple random sampling was applied to select elements from each stratum. Primary data was obtained using a structured questionnaire instrument. The validity of the instrument was determined using expert judgment and Content Validity Index (CVI). Reliability was determined through a pretest and Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Data was analyzed using SPSS v. 25. The study found that there is a significant and positive relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality. There was a significant and positive relationship between information dissemination and service quality. The study also revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality. The results revealed that customer orientation is positively associated with service quality among NWSC customers. The study concludes that customer orientation is a vital component for improving service quality. This research recommends enhancing customer orientation to improve service quality among NWSC customers. The study suggests future research; investigating the relationship between customer orientation and service quality from a broader perspective, and longitudinal research; examining the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among NWSC customers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study examines the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among NWSC customers. This chapter provides the introduction part of the study. Besides, it contains the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study, and conceptual framework.

1.1 Background to the Study

Delivering service quality has not only become the rhetoric for every business; no matter its size or nature, but also a strategic issue for discussion throughout the business discourse (Mpaata, Lubogoyi & Okiria, 2017). It has widely been documented that no business can survive unless it is able to continuously match or surpass the expectations of its customers in the products and services it renders (Narver & Slater, 1990). Service quality is said to be the conduit for stimulating customer satisfaction, happiness, and building strong relationships and loyalty (Gong & Yi, 2018; Kuo & Tang, 2013; Ledimo & Martins, 2015). As such, Marketers are convinced that service quality is a precondition for sustainable competitive advantage and profitability (Mpaata *et al.*, 2017).

Consequently, inquiries surrounding service delivery have become enormous, especially in the academic sphere. A couple of scholars have expressed interest to establish the antecedents of quality service delivery key among which include; customer orientation (Bisimwa, Nuwagaba & Musigire, 2019; Khan, Lima & Mahmud, 2021; Murrar, Batra & Rodger, 2021). This ascendant draws from the symbolic interaction theory developed by Blumer (1969). According to this theory, the ability to create value to others depends on the meaning, language and interaction that occurs within a social environment. Firms must be able to derive meaning to symbols expressed by customers through consistent interactions as a mechanism of acquainting with distinctive character, and

respond in accordance to the meaning of symbols. Interacting with customers enables the firm to get fully oriented with the tastes and preferences of customers, and this guides the firm to produce of valuable goods and services (Frambach, Fiss & Ingenbleek, 2016). This interaction is paramount in enabling the firm effectively manage its social environment (Aksan, Kısac, Aydın & Demirbuken, 2009).

On the contrary, service quality within many water utilities remains a global concern (World Vision, 2019). A report by World Health Organization (WHO, 2022); shows that many water utilities are unable to provide reliable safe water supply to more than two (2) billion people globally. They do not have the infrastructure required to extend water to all their customers and at least one in three people experience consistent water supply interruptions, amidst rising unresolved complaints to water suppliers. In Africa, the World Bank Report (2017) indicates that whereas water utilities in Africa are working hard to expand access, they have failed to keep up with the growing demand, and maintenance of aging infrastructure. Subsequently, many of the water utilities are unreliable, and less considerate of customer concerns, due to low engagement.

In Uganda, service quality mishaps have been eminent within the Water and Sanitation Sector. WaterAid Uganda (2020) reveals over 21 million people or 44% of the population in Uganda lack access to clean and safe water. The Report further indicates that over 38% of the physical water facilities are poorly maintained and customers are occasionally subjected to intermittent water supply. Furthermore, a recent survey undertaken by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) (Inventive Capacity Consults Ltd (2021)) indicates that the overall Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) for Water Services stood at 72%, a decline of two percentage points (2%) from 74% reported in a survey carried out by WaterAid Uganda in 2018.

National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) has similarly registered declines in the CSI from 85% in 2018 to 75% (NWSC Customer Satisfaction Survey Report 2022). The Report

indicates that some customers find the Corporation unreliable due irregular water supply, untimely and inaccurate bills, perceived high tariffs, untimely reconnections, delayed installation of new connections after payment stated (more than 1 month), and impolite call openings and ends. The Report (Research World International LTD (2023)) suggests that the gaps in service delivery are attributed to inadequate customer engagement and dissemination of information throughout the business.

Nevertheless, whereas it appears as if customer orientation is affecting service quality, there is limited empirical evidence that attests to this. Most of the existing studies relate to customer orientation and customer loyalty (Aburayya, Marzouqi, Alawadhi, Abdouli & Taryam, (2020)), customer orientation and customer satisfaction (Gonu, Agyei, Richard & Asare-Larbi, (2023), Li, Pomegbe, Dogbe & Novixoxo, (2019), Hawa, (2015)), and Customer orientation and firm performance (Frambach *et al*., (2016), Na, Kang & Jeong, (2019), Sisay,Verhees, & van Trijp, (2017)). In addition, the studies on customer orientation and service quality are limited in developing countries especially in Uganda. This is what prompted me to undertake a study to explore the extent to which customer orientation influences service quality in NWSC and ascertain whether fixing the gaps therein could cause substantial improvements in the Corporation's service quality thus enabling it achieve its CSI Corporate Plan target of 90% by 2026.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Service quality is inevitable for any business to thrive because it seeks to ensure that customers are contented (Nuwagaba & Moses, 2021; Ongâ & Abbey, 2019). However, the level of service quality in NWSC has continued to decline over the years amidst various strategies undertaken such as increasing on the customer care staff and boosting technology (MWE & NWSC Customer Satisfaction Surveys 2018; 2022). The decline has manifested in decline in empathy, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and tangibles (Namaalwa, 2023; Parliament of Uganda, 2023). Notably,

Parliament of Uganda (2023) reveal the number of customers complaining of inflated bills has increased by more than 50%, something which continues to affect the willingness of public to pay. On the other hand, over 37% of customers services calls made to NWSC are never attended to. Moreover, 76% of water applicants spend more than 6 months, as opposed to one month before they are connected (NWSC, 2021; NWSC Customer Charter, 2023). If this is not checked, it is likely that NWSC customers will lose confidence in the organization, resulting into loss of revenue. Certainly, empirical works (Li *et al*., 2019; Jung & Yoo, 2019) reveal that customer orientation is paramount in driving service quality. However, these findings were commonly limited to customers across the banking sector and SMEs in Korea and Ghana respectively. This propels the researcher to investigate the extent to which customer orientation is affecting service quality among NSWC customers in Uganda.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

To examine the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of NWSC.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following research objectives;

i.) To examine the relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality among customers of NWSC.

ii.) To assess the relationship between information dissemination and service quality among customers of NWSC.

iii.) To examine the relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality among customers of NWSC.

iv.) To examine relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of NWSC.

1.5 Research Questions

i.) What is the relationship between customer needs generation and service quality among customers of NWSC?

ii.) What is the relationship between information dissemination and service quality among customers of NWSC?

iii.) What is the relationship customer between responsiveness and service quality among customers of NWSC?

iv.) What is the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of NWSC?

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was confined to the geographical, subject and time scope.

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted across customers of NWSC in Kampala. This area is selected because it constitutes the largest proportion of NWSC customers (46%) and consisting of various categories. This enabled the researcher to obtain results, which are highly representative.

1.7.2 Subject Scope

This study focused on two variables, that is; customer orientation and service quality. In particular, customer orientation was studied as the independent variable while service quality the dependent variable. The study focused on service quality because it is an important aspect of Organizational Performance. Providing service quality increases a Firm's capacity to attract and maintain customers (Mpaata *et al*., 2017; Nuwagaba & Moses, 2021). In NWSC, the level of customer service quality was perceived to be declining amidst the Corporation's efforts to expand accessibility and enhance service delivery. This created the need to investigate the underlying reason(s). Empirical research demonstrates that customer orientation is one of the key antecedents

for service quality. It reveals that organizations must carry out customer needs generation, information dissemination, and exercise high customer responsiveness if they are to improve service quality (Bisimwa et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2021; Murrar *et al*., 2021). Accordingly, this research is interested in establishing how each of the customer orientation aspects can influence service quality in the organizational setup of NWSC. Worth noting is that the research is guided by the symbolic interaction theory.

1.8 Time Scope

This study was conducted from November 2022 to June 2023.

1.9 Significance of the Study

i. This study will provide empirical evidence indicating the extent to which customer orientation can enhance service quality. Management may use these results as they seek best strategies for enhancing service quality.

ii. The study findings could guide policy makers when formulating policies intended to improve access to clean and safe water, which will boost service quality.

iii. The study will stimulate the interests of other researchers to discover more as they refer to this document.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

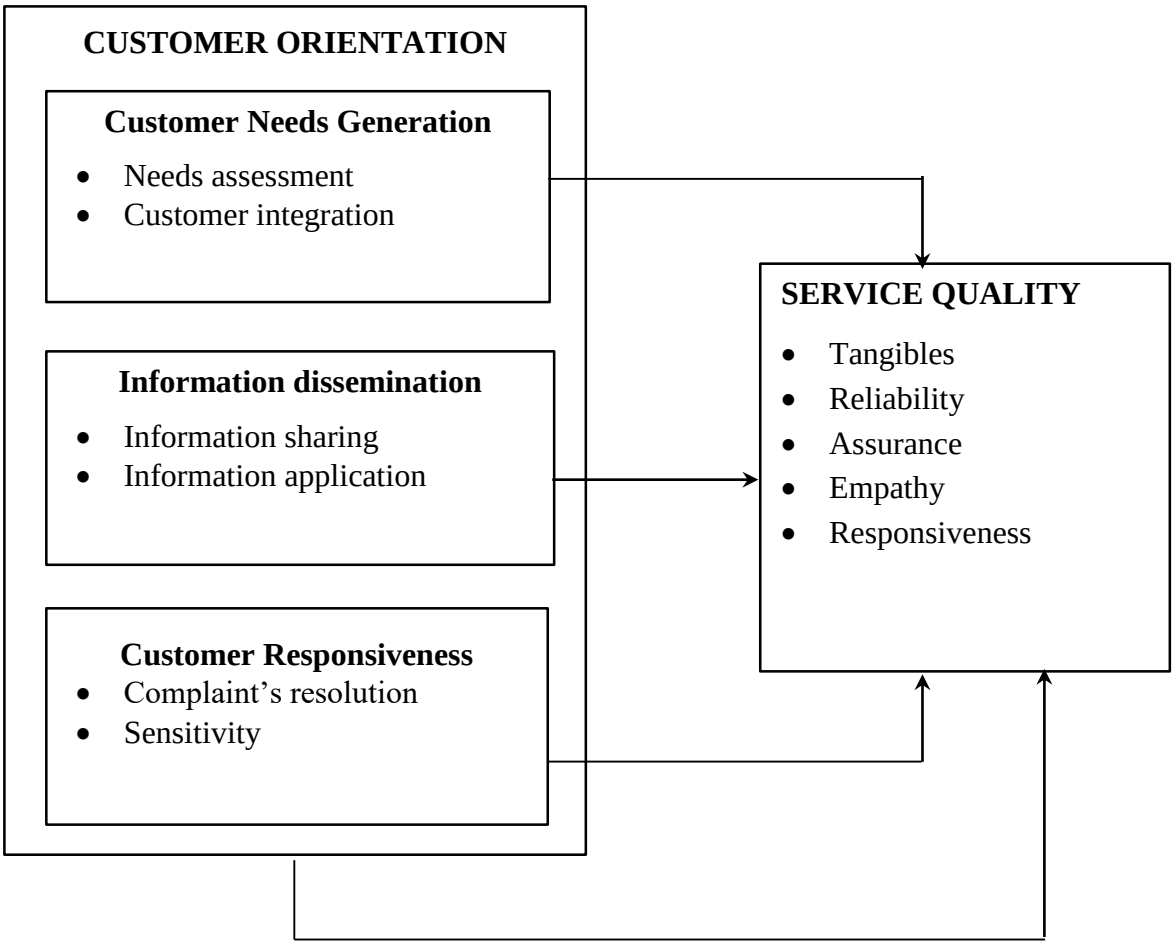

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Adopted and modified from literature review (Frambach et al., 2016; Hamzah et al., 2016; Hawa, 2015; Mpaata et al., 2017; Fesenmaier, 1991; Subhashini & Preetha, 2018; Crompton & MacKay, 1991).

The conceptual framework provides a brief comprehension of the studied variables. From this model, it has been revealed that service quality is dependent on customer orientation. As indicated in the model, customer orientation is explained by three attributes, that is; customer needs recognition; information sharing; and customer responsiveness (Frambach *et al.*, 2016; Hamzah *et al.*, 2016; Hawa, 2015). This framework reveals that each of these attributes has the potential to determine service quality. Moreover, the model goes ahead to indicate that jointly, the attributes of customer orientation can influence service quality.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature based on the objectives of the study, which were; to examine the relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality; assess the relationship between information dissemination and service quality; examine the relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality; examine relationship between customer orientation and service quality among customers of NWSC.

2.2 National Water and Sewerage Corporation

National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) is a Government Parastatal, which was established by Decree No. 34 of 1972, following a study on the need to improve water and sanitation services in the large Urban Centers of Uganda. The Corporation was re-established by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation Act of 1995. The Legal Framework governing the operations of the Corporation is defined by the NWSC Act, 1995, Cap. 317, Laws of Uganda. The principal business of the Corporation is to manage and provide water and sewerage services in areas entrusted to it. As at 30th June 2022, the Corporation was operating in 262 towns across the country (Annual Report, 2022).

2.3 Theoretical Review

This study will be guided by the symbolic interaction theory informed by (Blumer, 1969). This theory reveals that languages and symbols facilitate communication with others. It emphasizes that firms must be able to interpret the communication and symbols expressed from a social setting or customer category. The theory further indicates that the languages and symbols keep changing, which necessitates continuous interaction within the social setting to keep acquainted with the

various changes to facilitate an appropriate meaning (Blumer, 1969). This theory denotes those meanings are continuously generated and recreated through an interpretive process which manifests during interaction.

By meaning, this theory refers to the intersubjective and constant interpretation of the course of action (Stryker, 1980) . Therefore, social interaction is of the view that a firm must take action or be responsive in their actions to meet the expectations of a social setting. To stress this further, Dewey (1986) is of the view that the actors should constantly create and recreate experiences from the interactions. This theory is adopted to explain the relevance of customer orientation in enhancing service delivery. In line with this theory, customer orientation recognizes the relevance of customer responsiveness in what has been synchronized as responsive actions. Moreover, this theory emphasizes the need to interact with customers, which is equally emphasized in the dissemination of information attribute for customer orientation. Guided by the same theory, it can be argued that establishing meanings from the communication and symbols recognizes the essence of customer needs recognition.

2.4 Customer Orientation

Customer orientation is a concept, which is primarily concerned with ensuring that products and services rendered to customers match their needs and expectations (Gonu *et al*., (2023)). It is “the sufficient understanding of one's target buyers to be able to create superior value for them continuously” (Narver & Slater, 1990). It includes all activities that involve generating market intelligence about customers and competitors, analyzing it and distributing that knowledge throughout the organization (Narver and Slater (1998)). The organization must therefore obtain information from the customers as a mechanism for understanding needs and subsequently reacting in the same manner. Similarly, Frambach *et al.,* (2016) indicate that customer orientation is concerned with acquiring sufficient information about the customer with the intention of serving

them effectively. It is aimed at ensuring that the customer makes the right choice that will satisfy their needs and expectations (Hu, Liu and Zhang (2020).

From literature, it appears customer orientation is subdivided into behavioral and cultural perspective (Frambach *et al.,* 2016). For instance, Hu et al., (2020) comprehended customer orientation in terms of customer-focus and customer response. This study further goes on to indicate that customer-focus is the cultural attitude towards the customer, which aims at understanding expectations for customers. Customer response on the other hand relates to organizational commitment aimed at satisfying customer expectations. On the other hand, Hawa (2015) conceptualized customer orientation in terms of customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness. These constructs have been considered as being more elaborative and realistic measures. Accordingly, they have been accepted and applied in several studies (Frambach *et al.,* 2016; Okiria, 2017; Sisay *et al.,* 2017). Herein, customer needs recognition is a measure of employee's attitude towards carrying out market intelligence. Dissemination relates to the willingness to share customer information within the organization while customer responsiveness is concerned with the implementation of customer knowledge reflected in the ability to produce products and services which are in congruence with the needs and wants of customers.

2.5 Service Quality

It is generally accepted that one of the intensions of every organization is to offer quality services to customers (Keshavarz & Jamshidi, 2018). From the other perspective, it is acknowledged that offering quality service is one of the most challenging issues in marketing because the customer expectations differ from one person to another (Ronald, Michelle & Provia, 2015). It is on that premise that much as service quality has widely been studied, it remains one of the most prominent (Subhashini & Preetha, 2018). Conceptually speaking, service quality refers to the comparison between the consumer expectation and the actual service performance (Munusamy, Chelliah &

Mun, 2010). This definition contends with Subhashini and Preetha (2018) who highlighted that service quality as working beyond the expectations of the customer. Although, Kalulu *et al.,* (2015) expressed that service delivery is the physical, situational and behavioral aspects expressed by the customer. Overall, the definition presented portray the message that service quality occurs when a firm is able to demonstrate quality during three stages, that is; before rendering the service, during the process of rendering the service, and after rendering the service to the customer or what is commonly referred to as after-sales service.

Generally, consistence has widely been expressed regarding the way service quality is conceptualized. The attributes which dominate include; tangibles, reliability, responsibility, assurance and empathy which were coined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, (1988). These attributes have since then been applied in several studies which constitute the service quality variable (Keshavarz & Jamshidi, 2018; Okiria, 2017; Osarenkhoe *et al.,* 2015; Subhashini & Preetha, 2018). Owing to the fact that these attributes have widely been recognized implies consistence and general acceptance as appropriate measures of service quality. By tangibles, the construct refers to the physical cues that which form part of the service delivery process. As indicated by Subhashini and Preetha (2018), these services are in form of physical facilities and information technology applied when offering a specific service. On the other hand, Gong and Yi (2018) provide light on constructs of reliability and responsibility. In this study, they indicate that reliability refers to the dependability and accuracy exercised when rendering services to customers. Further, they reveal that responsibility refers to the willingness to help customers. The notion of assurance, as expressed by Keshavarz and Jamshidi (2018) explains the credibility, courtesy, competence and perceived security of the customer. Lastly, empathy explains the attention rendered to the customer, and this could be expressed in terms of listening to customer complaints, prompt response, willingness to help as well as keeping the customer at heart.

2.6 Customer needs generation and Service Quality

Customer needs generation and service quality are two concepts that have received wide spread attention from business management scholars and academia in an attempt to explore how the two variables can be used to boost service quality. Certainly, one of the critical discussions in the existing scanty literature is how customer needs generation relates to service quality. For instance, a study by Martinelli and Tunisini (2019) indicated that customer needs generation is an important aspect as far as enhancing service quality is concerned. Results obtained under this study reveal that effective customer needs generation avails service providers with an effective competitive strategy which allows for the improvement in service quality. Another study conducted by Mogaka, Odari and Arani (2022) among food and beverage industry in Kenya also maintained that incoprporation of customer needs generation necessarily boosts competitiveness of beverage manufacturers by over 66.1 percent which later prompts improvement in service quality.

On the contrary, Pasaribu, Prasetio and Sharif (2020) discovered that intergation customer needs has a negative but significant effect on competitive strategy which later affects the purpose of improving service quality. Therefore, the relationship that exists between customers needs generation and service quality remains questionable hence the need for a more recent study to ascertain the same more so in Uganda's context. More over, Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp and Oláh (2019) stressed that with proper customer needs generation, service providers tend to become more flexible and coordinative in amanner that allows for inroduction of various programs to improve service quality. a critical analysis of the above study thererfore indicates that customer needs generation is highly relate with service quality. Accordingly, Schweitzer, Van den Hende and Hultink (2019) also maintained that intergration of consumer needs not only allows firms to effectively meet outlined prioirities but all exceed conservational expectations which results into improved service quality.

Undeniably, Füller, Weking, Böhm and Krcmar (2019) stressed further that focusing on customer needs generation increasingly plays an integral role in the pursuit of improving service quality. Results obtained under this study indicated that effective intregation of customer needs and demands allows for exhaustive innovations and improvements thus leading to improvement in service quality. Additionally, one of the most recent studies by Mogaka et al., (2022) mentioned that aspects of customer needs generation most especially customer integration allows buiness firms ascertain indespensible data thus fostering new developments to improve service quality. Another study conducted by Gathaku and Gitari (2022) from a medical perpective also concluded that customer needs generation is significant in infleuncing service quality. Results obtained across seventeen (17) public hospitals in Kenya recommended the need to create an environment that ensures effective integration of customer needs among public hospitals so as to improve service quality.

In addition, the study further revealed that effective customer needs generation allows firms get informed about customer expectations thus enabling them adopt fresh ideas that positively impact on service quality. In addiion, Hamilton-Ibama and Ogonu (2021) noted that thorogh intergration of customer needs is the top-secret of enhancing service quality in today'c competitive world. From the above, it is evident that much as significant number of empirical evidence to indicate a positive relationship between customer needs generation and service quality, the number of authors in disregard of the same cannot be underestimated. Moreover, almost all the conducted studies have been limited to the developing world with Uganda inclusive, resulting in a gap that could be addressed by conducting more research about the same.

2.7 Information Dissemination and Service Quality

From literature, information dissemination has become a high topicality issue in determining service quality world over. Existing scholars works indeed reveal that information dissemination

plays an integral role in positively impacting service quality. For instance, an empirical study conducted by Fosso Wamba, Akter, Trinchera and De Bourmont (2019) from a business perspective confirmed that information dissemination is a pinnacle in determining service quality. They emphasized that institutions require frequent information dissemination because it allows for the execution of tasks and responsibilities, which improves service quality. With the same view, Müller, Veile and Voigt (2020) reported that information dissemination is crucial in enhancing service quality. Findings ascertained under this study asserts that effective information dissemination enhances innovative behaviors among team members, which is key in fostering remarkable service quality.

Likewise, a study conducted by Ganguly, Talukdar and Chatterjee (2019) across over 190 respondents from the Indian industrial domain uncovered by active information dissemination amplifies innovation capabilities among organizations, which later prompts high service quality. Additionally, an analysis by Colicchia, Creazza, Noè and Strozzi (2019) maintained that effective information dissemination minimizes effects of disruption among individual team members, which eventually drives high quality service outcomes. Notably, Fosso Wamba et al., (2019) ascertained that information dissemination increases significantly the understandability of performance activities, which directly increases service quality. It is important to note however that this study was conducted across 302 business analysts from various organizations in France and USA. For Chaithanapat, Punnakitikashem and Rakthin (2022), information dissemination provides guarantee for improving service quality. This study revealed that information dissemination facilitates efficiency and effectiveness among organizations, which culminates into improved service quality. This study was conducted across 283 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand.

Similarly, Baah, Agyeman, Acquah, Agyabeng-Mensah, Afum, Issau, Ofori and Faibil, (2022) emphasized that information dissemination provides a yardstick for making informed decisions

which increase the intensity of attaining improved service quality. Additionally, Phomlaphatrachakom (2020) maintained that effective information dissemination enhances business value and competitiveness, which eventually improves service quality. Nevertheless, this empirical study was conducted across auto parts businesses in Thailand. From Medical perspective, Fergus et al., (2021) maintained that information dissemination is paramount in influencing service quality outcomes. Results obtained reveals that timely and effective dissemination of information intensifies valuable use of distributed info, which is mainly focused on to improve service quality. Much as the above study was conducted in a Ugandan setting, the focus was purely on Uganda's medical sector.

Nevertheless, a study conducted by Rusli, Baharuddin, Hutagalung, Yusriadi and Nurhaida (2021) concluded that information dissemination was a weak factor in influencing service quality. This conclusion was made upon realizing that some of the organizations, which had active information dissemination, models failed to effectively achieve service quality. In addition, Sukmaswati, Lian and Wardiah (2020) findings unveil that not all information dissemination attributes are able to influence service quality, although this study does not indicate those that contribute and those, which do not. The above contradiction therefore communicates that the association between information dissemination and service quality is not an obvious one, and subsequently making conclusive remarks must depend upon an empirically derived connection. Therefore, a question of how information dissemination relates with service quality is justified.

2.8 Customer responsiveness and Service Quality

World over, studies have interlinked numerous variables to service quality. However, amongst all variables, customer responsiveness has attracted much interest and attention as the most salient concept that is undeniably intertwined with service quality. This is a paradigm that has been greatly settled on by various scholars and academia suggesting that the more customer responsiveness is

intensified, the better in the context of service quality. For instance, in one of the studies conducted by Ketelsen, Janssen and Hamm (2020) emphasized that customer responsiveness should not be taken for granted because it greatly influences service quality. The study asserts that responsive customers tend to be more resilient and above all, they hold positive perceptions towards services without compromising with quality. Similarly, Amutha (2016) observed that consumer responsiveness stimulates brand loyalty of a particular service which later drives high levels of the overall service quality.

According to Tuorila and Hartmann (2020), customer responsiveness stimulates high levels of commitment towards a particular service, which subsequently acts as a push factor in using the platform. In addition, Chopdar and Balakrishnan (2020) uncovered that customer responsiveness is a precondition that stimulates customer commitment and loyalty towards the quality of a particular product. The study therefore concludes that service providers are more likely to engage in actions that improve service quality whenever they feel that customers are highly committed and loyal towards the service. Likewise, Nasiri and Shokouhyar (2021) revealed that positive customer responsiveness simulates confidence amongst customers, which later prompts them to develop a strong inclination towards the service perceiving it to be more reliable with an assured quality. This is more likely to prompt service providers to improve the service quality.

Additionally, Ketelsen et al., (2020) emphasized that remarkable levels of customer responsiveness increase service popularity and awareness on the market, which subsequently leads to an increase in number of new customers, which eventually leads into an improvement in service quality. Conversely, Vila-López and Küster-Boluda (2019) reported that service providers need to come up with relevant mechanisms of stimulating positive customer responsiveness because it is the surest way they are likely to foster improvement in service quality. The study suggests that customer responsive levels act as conduits through which service providers obtain feedback about a particular

service, which later prompts service providers to either maintain or improve service quality. Likewise, Nasiri and Shokouhyar (2021) also emphasized that customer responsiveness bridges the gap between customers and service providers thus creating room for customers to suggest possible strategies that are likely to eventually drive high service quality. Consistently, Chopdar and Balakrishnan (2020) maintained that customer responsiveness has a higher influence on service quality.

Much as the above studies reveal a positive link between customer responsiveness and service quality, some scholars reveal otherwise, for instance Etgar and Fuchs (2009) observed a reversed model of relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality. Results obtained under this study instead agree that higher service quality increases customer responsiveness. Nevertheless, the above studies are too obsolete to be relied on while making conclusions regarding customer responsiveness and service quality. The above contradiction therefore communicates that the association between customer responsiveness and service quality is not an obvious one, and subsequently making conclusive remarks must depend upon an empirically derived connection. Therefore, a question of how customer responsiveness relates with service quality is justified.

2.9 Customer Orientation and Service Quality

There is a general paucity of literature to explain how customer orientation relates with service quality (Li, Pomegbe, Dogbe & Novixoxo, 2019). Although this is the case, the little research available acknowledges that customer orientation is capable of influencing service quality. For instance, an empirical study conducted by Dogra and Sharma (2021) that sampled over 500 patients from selected multi-specialty hospitals of North India concluded that effective customer orientation greatly influences service quality. Another study conducted by Aburayya et al., (2020) among primary health centre in UAE particularly Dubai indicated that customer orientation is positively correlated with service quality. Much as the above studies reveal that there is a positive correlation

between customer orientation and service quality, results obtained herein were limited to the Indian and Dubai setting hence limiting the generalizability of the above findings across other localities.

Furthermore, an empirical study conducted by Li, Pomegbe, Dogbe and Novixoxo (2019) revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between customer orientation and service quality. Data obtained from a sample of 350 SMEs in Ghana revealed that customer orientation behaviors play an integral role influencing perceived service quality. Accordingly, a study by Jung and Yoo (2019) from a commercial perspective displayed that customer orientation is a rapport-building strategy that entities usually adopt to come up with a closer contact with their consumers. Besides, this enables them receive feedback regarding what they need to undertake to improve service quality. Nevertheless, the study above was limited to only retail bank customers in the Republic of Korea. The above contradiction therefore communicates that the association between customer orientation and service quality is not an obvious one, and subsequently making conclusive remarks must depend upon an empirically derived connection. Therefore, a question of how customer orientation relates with service quality in Uganda's context is justified.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological issues and assumptions that were applied in pursuant of this study. The chapter contains the research design; study population; sample size and sampling techniques; data sources; data collection instrument; measurement of variables; validity and reliability; data analysis, processing and interpretation; and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study applied a cross-sectional research design along with a quantitative research approach. The cross-sectional design was applied since it enables linking data to the hypotheses, model development and generalization of results. Moreover, this research design facilitates a wide sample coverage within a short time frame (Creswell and Poth, 2017). The Researcher also opted for a quantitative research approach because it is appropriate for the study. The intention of this research is to examine the relationship between variables. Quantitative research clearly demonstrates the cause-and-effect relationship between variables (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017).

3.3 Study Population

The population comprised of 33,930 individual falling under the different categories of National Water and Sewerage Corporation Customers in Kampala (NWSC, 2022). These customers were regarded as both the unit of analysis and unit of inquiry in this particular study.

3.4 Sample size and Selection techniques

The sample size was derived based on Yamane (1967) formular presented below.

$$n_r = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n_r is the desired sample size,

N is the population

e is the allowable error, taken as 5%.

$$n_r = \frac{33,930}{1+33,390\ (0.05)^2}$$

$n_r =$ 395.3394

From the computation, this study targeted a sample a sample of 395 customers within Kampala.

To obtain this sample, the researcher applied stratified random sampling technique. This technique involved categorizing the target population according to a specific characteristic after which simple random sampling was applied to select elements from each stratum. NWSC categorizes customers according to 5 groups; Commercial, Domestic, Institutional, Industrial and Public Stand Post (PSP). The researcher ensured that each of these groups served as a different stratum. Depending on the number of customers from each category, the researcher disproportionately established the number of customers to be considered. Simple random sampling was applied to randomly select customers from each category without replacing until the targeted number was fully obtained. Stratified random sampling was used because it caters for the heterogeneity within the population (Sahu, 2013). Sample size selection and determination is well presented in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample size selection

Customer Category	Population	Sample Size
Commercial	4,688	55
Domestic	27,901	325
Institutional	637	7
Industrial	22	0
PSP	682	8

Total	**33,930**	**395**

Source: NSWS, (2020)

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The study used a questionnaire instrument to collect data. A questionnaire instrument was adopted because of the large sample that was targeted under this study. This instrument is highly effective in obtaining data from a large and dispersed sample (Marvasti, 2018). The instrument contained only closed-ended questions which were anchored on a 5-Point Likert scale whose points were defined as 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-not sure, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. This scale was selected because it enables respondents to express the magnitude of agreement or disagreement with the different notions (Saunders et al., 2015; Vagias, 2006).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

3.6.1 Validity

Content validity of the instrument was obtained using expert judgment and Content Validity Index (CVI). After drafting the questionnaire, it was presented to the supervisor and other experts in human resource management to advise on the understandability of the items in the instrument for an expert judgment. Based on the comments obtained, the researcher amended the instrument. CVI involved drafting the questionnaire in a manner which necessitates respondents to tick from two responses of relevant and non-relevant, after which it was distributed to specific people who are knowledgeable about subject matter to comment on the content validity. The results were used to compute CVI using the formular K/N, where; K indicated the number of items considered as valid under a specific construct or variable, and N-number of items under a specific variable or construct in order to check whether the ratio under each variable meets the threshold of 0.7 as recommended by Creswell (2014). The results are presented in table 3.2.

3.6.2 Reliability

The researcher ascertained the reliability of the instrument through pretesting and computing the Cronbach Alpha. The researcher conducted a mini-survey of 10-15 questionnaires prior to the actual data collection exercise. Based on the results obtained, the researcher was able to rephrase questions to ensure the instrument is fit enough to be used for data collection purposes. In addition, the researcher obtained the Cronbach Alpha coefficient from the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) from field results. As a general rule, the alpha coefficient for every variable or construct should be at least 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The same scale was used to check for internal consistence in the results obtained. The results obtained are presented in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Validity and Reliability

Variable	Content Validity Index	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Customer Orientation	0.73	0.883	15
Service Quality	0.82	0.877	28

Source: Primary Data

Table 3.2 indicates CVI obtained for customer orientation and service quality was above the 0.7 cut-off. Hence, the results implied that, overall, the tool used appropriate words for the items contained in the document used for data collection. In addition, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained in respect to customer needs generation, information dissemination, customer responsiveness and service quality were over and above the acceptable threshold of 0.7. This meant that the results obtained were reliable which further signified that the results were fit to be based on for making conclusions and recommendations.

3.7 Measurement of Variables

In this study, customer orientation was conceptualized in terms of customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness. These constructs have gained prominence

by several studies (Frambach et al., 2016; Hawa, 2015; Okiria, 2017; Sisay et al., 2017). The researcher adopted these items from previous empirical studies (Hawa, 2015; Frambach et al., 2016; Sisay et al., 2017 Fesenmaier, 1991; Crompton & MacKay, 1991) which were modified to fit the context of the study and later subjected to the 5-Point Likert scale.

Service Quality was conceptualized using a five-dimensional construct which constituted tangibles, reliability, responsibility, assurance and empathy (Keshavarz & Jamshidi, 2018; Okiria, 2017; Osarenkhoe et al., 2015; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Subhashini & Preetha, 2018). The items used herein were adopted from previous works (Ronald et al., 2015; Milner & Furnham, 2017; Subhashini & Preetha, 2018) which were modified to fit the context of the study, before being subjected to the 5-Point Likert scale.

3.8 Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Data obtained from the field was sorted, cleaned and edited accordingly. The data was captured in SPSS (v.25) for analysis. The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret results. Notably, the frequency table was used to present results related to demographic characteristics, and interpreted based on percentages. Correlation analysis examined the relationship between studied variables and regression confirmed the significance and their predictability.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that the university approves the research proposal, before engaging in data collection. Before engaging respondents to participate in the research, the researcher officially sought permission from the NWSC customers that were sampled. The researcher also made sure that only respondents who were interested in participating in the research were provided with a questionnaire to fill. The researcher did not promise any form of incentive to respondents to

participate or coerced any to do so. Importantly, the researcher used the results obtained from the different respondent strictly for academic purpose.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the data presentation, analysis and interpretation of findings based on the objectives of the study which were; to examine the relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality among NWSC customers; to assess the relationship between information dissemination and service quality among NWSC customers; to examine the relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality among NWSC customers and to examine the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among NWSC customers.

4.2 Response Rate

The number of respondents who participated in the study was 302 as opposed to the targeted 395 NWSC customers in Kampala. This represents a response rate of 76.5%, which is above the minimum recommended rate of 70% for basic research. This implies that the data obtained in this study can be relied upon for analysis.

4.3 Respondents' Characteristics

This study sought respondents' characteristics of gender, age, level of education, customer category as well as years as a customer of NWSC. These results are presented in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Respondents' characteristics

Demographics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	141	46.7
Female	161	53.3
Total	**302**	**100**
Age Bracket		
Less than 25yrs	18	6.0
26-35yrs	22	7.3
36-45yrs	86	28.5
46-55yrs	95	31.5
56 above	81	26.8
Total	**302**	**100**
Level of Education		
Primary	17	5.6
Secondary	22	7.3
Diploma	105	34.8
Bachelor's Degree	110	36.4
Master's Degree	48	15.9
Total	**302**	**100**
Category of customer		
Commercial	81	26.8
Domestic	97	32.1
Institutional	43	14.2
Industrial	35	11.6
PSP	46	15.2
Total	**302**	**100**
Years as a NWSC customer		
Less than a year	23	7.6
1-4 yrs	33	10.9
5-8 yrs	55	18.2
9-12 yrs	84	27.8
13 yrs above	107	35.4
Total	**302**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

Results in table 4.1 revealed that most respondents were females. This meant that majority of the NWSC customers are females. Perhaps, because water scarcity disproportionately affects women and girls, and they therefore tend to be more concerned with water issues. Results further indicated that most respondents were aged between 46-55yrs. This meant that at least most customers were

old enough and had at least used NWSC services for quite some time. Besides, old enough customers tend to be conversant with the trend of service delivery and they possess the required knowledge for in improvement in service delivery. In relation to level of education, results in table 4.1 revealed most respondents had bachelor's degree (36.4%). This implied at least majority of the NWSC customer were knowledgeable and could well comprehend how customer orientation and service quality are interconnected. In addition, results obtained that most respondents were domestic consumers and had been customers of NWSC for at least 13 years. This implied that these customers were too conversant and well acquitted with realistic ideas necessary for improving service quality.

4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

This study used Pearson Correlation Analysis along with narrative statements to determine the nature of the relationship between studied variables. Under the Pearson correlation, the study used "positive" or "negative" relationship to indicate the nature of the statistical result obtainedregarding a particular objective. Key narratives corresponding to each objective were identified and presented, interpreted, and compared with the statistical results before a final conclusive remark regarding the association or relationship between studied variables was made for each objective. These results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables/Constructs	1	2	3	4
Customer needs generation (1)	1			
Information dissemination (2)	.441**	1		
Customer responsiveness (3)	.426**	.439**	1	
Service quality (4)	**.541****	**.495****	**.466****	**1**

*Notes: n=302, * p<.05 level (2-tailed), * * p<.01 level (2-tailed*

Source: Primary Data

4.4.1 Customer needs generation and Service quality

Correlation results presented in Table 4.2 obtained a significant and positive relationship between customer needs generation and service quality (r=.541, p<.01). The results implied that enhancing customer needs generation is associated with improvement in service quality among NWSC customers.

4.4.2 Information dissemination and Service quality

Table 4.2 indicate a significant and positive relationship between information dissemination and service quality (r=.495, p<0.01). This implies that enhancing information dissemination is associated with an improvement in service quality among NWSC customers.

4.4.3 Customer responsiveness and Service quality

Results in table 4.2 indicate a positive and significant relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality (r=.466, p<.01). The results portray that an improvement in customer responsiveness would increase service quality among NWSC customers.

4.5 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was obtained to determine the predictability of the independent variables (customer orientation) in the variances that would be exhibited in the dependent variable (service

quality). The study used hierarchical regression model because it is a more elaborative approach as it ably ranks variables according to their order of predictability. These results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.570	0.169		9.304	0.000
Customer needs generation	0.226	0.035	0.339	6.536	0.000
Information dissemination	0.245	0.051	0.253	4.848	0.000
Customer responsiveness	0.139	0.034	0.210	4.052	0.000
	R	**R^2**	**Adj. R^2**	**F**	**Sig.**
	.638[a]	0.407	0.401	68.150	.000[b]

a. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

b. Predictors: (Constant), customer needs generation, Information dissemination, Customer Responsiveness

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.3 obtained Adj. R^2=.401 which implied that jointly customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness significantly predict 40.1% of the variations in service quality among NWSC customers. Furthermore, the results indicate standardized coefficients (β=.339, $p<.05$) in relation to customer needs generation; (β=.253, $p<.05$) in relation to information dissemination as well as (β=.210, $p<.05$) in relation to customer responsiveness among NWSC customers. Based on the p-values, the results signify that jointly customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness significantly predict service quality among NWSC customers. As reflected by the results, a unit change in customer needs generation resulted in a .339 or 33.9% positive unit change in service quality. Moreover, a unit change in information dissemination resulted into .253 or 25.3% positive unit change in service quality. Additionally, a

unit change in customer responsiveness resulted in a .210 or 21.0% unit change in service quality. That said, the results revealed that customer needs generation is the better predictor of service quality among NWSC customers.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the study objectives which include; examine the relationship between customers' needs generation and service quality; to assess the relationship between information dissemination and service quality; to examine the relationship between customer responsiveness and service quality; and to examine the relationship between customer orientation and service quality among NWSC customers. The chapter also points out the study limitations, and proposed areas for further study.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Customer needs generation and Service quality

The findings found out that customer needs generation is associated with service quality. These findings demonstrated that enhancement of customer needs assessment within organizations, especially NSWC would result into an improvement in service quality. The implication to this effect is that customer needs generation is one of the most important customer orientation aspect which should not be taken for granted as organizations seek to address the issue of service quality. In the researcher's opinion, this can be explained by the fact that customer needs generation offers organizations with an extra edge of effectively meeting customer priorities and engaging in exhaustive innovations which greatly enhance service quality. Indeed, organizations which engage in customer needs generation are bothered about how best they can frequently carryout customer surveys so as to solicit information about the services they offer. Moreover, such organizations also highly value customer feedback so that they can improve on the output of the services they offer.

In congruence, Mogaka et al (2022) when investigating customers across the food and beverage industry in Kenya noted that effective customer needs generation is key in fostering service quality

because it boosts the competitive edge of organizations. Likewise, a study condcuted by Pakurár et al., (2019) stressed that proper customer needs generation allows service providers to adjust flexibly and cordinatively to various programs so as to expand service quality. This depicts a symbolic interaction arrangement between service providers and customers. The symbolic interaction theory observed that customer needs and demands keep changing, which necessitates continuous interaction within the social setting to keep acquainted with the various changes to facilitate an appropriate meaning (Blumer, 1969).

In the context of these findings, it is evident that organizations which engage in customer needs generation usually make realistic alterations and changes. The essence is to improve service quality. Henceforth, it can be concluded that this research contributes to this theory, affirming that the relationship between the service providers and customers mainly hinges on the symbolic interactions. From the policy and managerial perspective, this research urges that career customer needs generation should strongly be considered as a key strategy whose effective execution can address service quality concerns.

5.2.2 Information dissemination and Service quality

Findings established that there exists a positive association between information dissemination and service quality. These findings meant that enhancing information dissemination increases the propensity of improving service quality among NWSC customers. In this case, the findings suggest that the more customers are disseminated with relevant information, the more likely they give their ideas so as to improve on service quality. According to this research, this is true because improving service quality requires constant information dissemination. Moreover, information dissemination is a key customer orientation strategy in allowing interactions between service providers and customers. This interaction allows service providers to keep customer updated about the service, create clear information dissemination channels which are vital in improving service quality. The

findings are consistent with Fosso et al., (2019) who emphasized that failure to disseminate information is a major impediment for improving service quality. With the same view, Müller et al., (2020) expressed that information dissemination is crucial in enhancing service quality simply because it improves innovations which eventually result into improved service quality.

This research is therefore important because it clearly demonstrates that information impediment is a potential threat in Uganda as well, especially among NWSC customers. It suggests that improving information dissemination can act as one of the channels for improving service quality as it is the case in other areas. Therefore, the study informs managers to enhance frequency of information dissemination among NWSC customers. This will be important in obtaining feedback about particular services. Accordingly, service providers will base on such feedback frameworks tom make resolutions so as to improve service quality. Certainly, this research clarifies that one of the important issues that can improve service quality among NWSC customers is by revamping frequency of information dissemination. Moreover, the study informs managers and policy makers to be vigilant enough and implement clear information dissemination systems in order to improve service quality among NWSC customers.

5.2.3 Customer responsiveness and Service quality

The findings postulated that customer responsiveness is positively associated with service quality. By these findings, it meant that enhancing customer responsiveness would increase service quality, more so among NWSC customers. With the same line of thinking, this research emphasizes that customer responsiveness is prime in motivating service providers to quickly act upon complaint raised, provide instant feedback regarding any inquiries as well as notifying customer about the way forward of the raised concerns. In the same manner, customer responsiveness is expected to increase service provider's response to the emerging requests and their willingness to provide quality services. From this reasoning, it can be argued that engaging in aspects of customer

responsiveness stimulates integrity and swift problem-solving behavior among service providers. Moreover, customer responsiveness increases timeliness while responding customer requests and inquiries. Such practices eventually upsurge the propensity of attaining improved service quality among NWSC customers.

Consistent with the empirical evidence, these findings are consistent with the symbolic interaction theory which states that service providers must take action and be responsive in their operations and actions so as to meet expectations of the social setting (Kuhn, 1964). On that note, it can be argued that customer responsiveness is one of those interactive processes that creates an enabling environment for enhancing service quality. Moreover, this research finds the aforementioned argument complementary to the previous research works of Amutha (2016) who emphasized that improving service quality hinges on the appropriateness of customer responsiveness. Empirically, the findings correspond with Tuorila and Hartmann (2020) who emphasized that customer responsiveness is a driving factor which propels service providers to engage in actions that enhance improvement in service quality. Ketelsen et al., (2020) also emphasized that remarkable levels of customer responsiveness increase service popularity and awareness which subsequently tempts service providers to increasingly offer customers with appealing and attractive services.

The current study is important because it clearly demonstrates the relevance of customer responsiveness in improving service quality in Uganda's environment. The consistence of the findings also suggests that the essence of customer responsiveness in fostering service quality cuts across several service providers. Moreover, the study provides a firm ground for policy makers and managers in Uganda to make sure customer responsiveness is enhanced. It affirms that where customer responsiveness is enhanced, it will increase on the propensity of improving service quality.

5.2.4 Customer orientation and Service quality

Findings established that jointly aspects of customer orientation (customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness) are significant predictors of service quality especially among NWSC customers. From these findings, the research identifies three critical issues of emphasis. First and foremost, the findings demonstrate that stimulating customer needs generation results into significant positive variances in service quality. In other words, the research demonstrates that when customer needs generation is enhanced, service quality among NWSC customers will definitely increase. In support, this research postulates that boosting customer needs generation would enable service providers understand what customers want, discuss customer needs which allows modification of services to meet the required service quality. This is so because enhancing customer needs generation is associated with timely response to customer requests. Moreover, enhanced customer responsiveness allows service providers to act in accordance to customer suggestions, and also pay attention to individual customers. This is in line with Pakurár et al., (2019) who also emphasized that customer responsiveness provides a podium for improving service quality.

Secondly, these findings demonstrate the fact that significant improvement in information dissemination among NWSC customers allows service providers to make modifications in order to improve service quality. In support, this research argues that since improving service quality requires effective dissemination of information, service providers need to clearly keep customers updated about the service, design clear channels for information flow as well as regularly providing customers information updates regarding the services. This makes it prudent for service providers to intensify information dissemination in order to obtain requirements necessary to improve service quality. Therefore, this research signals to service providers why it is always important to frequently allow regular information dissemination. Indeed, considerable research has expressed that it is easy to improve service quality when service providers effectively engage in appropriate information

dissemination activities (Fosso Wamba et al., 2019; Chaithanapat et al., 2022; Baah et al., 2022). In complement, Ganguly et al., (2019) are of a view that active information dissemination amplifies innovation capabilities among organizations which later prompts high service quality.

Thirdly, this research unleashes that customer responsiveness is a key precondition for improving service quality among NWSC customers. It postulates that customer responsiveness serves as a motive for stimulating integrity and swift problem-solving behavior among service providers. Moreover, customer responsiveness increases timeliness while responding customer requests and inquiries. Such practices ultimately increase the propensity of attaining improved service quality among NWSC customers. Indeed, this research also emphasizes that customer responsiveness is vital in motivating service providers to quickly act upon the raised customers' complaints, provide instant feedback regarding any inquiries as well as notifying customer about the way forward of the raised concerns. In the same context, Nasiri and Shokouhyar (2021) emphasized that positive customer responsiveness builds a strong inclination towards service providers. This prompts service providers to undertake different modifications so as to avail customers with quality services.

Most importantly, this study observes that customer needs generation is the best predictor of service quality, more so among NWSC customers. These findings stress the relevance of customer needs generation over other components of customer orientation in stimulating service quality. Although prior research acknowledges that customer orientation predicts service delivery, it does not specify which attribute between customer needs generation, information dissemination and customer responsiveness supersede (Dogra & Sharma, 2021; Aburayya et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019). The current research comprehends this emphasizing that customer needs generation is the most relevant customer orientation attribute which steers service quality. To complement, this research argues service providers to intensify customer orientation aspects in order to improve service quality at some point.

5.3 Conclusion

Customer orientation plays an instrumental role in improving service quality, especially among NWSC customers. While improving service quality is paramount, most service providers have done little to allow it take shape. With customer orientation in place, service providers are able clearly identify customers' sense of taste and preferences through various aspects of customer orientation so as to realize an improvement in the service quality, especially among NWSC customers.

This research elaborates that customer responsiveness is an important attribute in customer orientation and should never be taken for granted when promoting service quality. It has the capacity to increase the intensity at which service quality is enhanced. Interestingly, customer responsiveness strengthens service provider's response to the emerging customer requests which improves service quality.

It is also affirmed that information dissemination will increase the intensity of service providers to achieve an improvement in service quality. The frequency of disseminating information by service provider through various channels create a platform where customers are able to give their ideas and opinion regarding the service so at realize quality output.

Important to note, it is unleashed that customer needs generation is not only relevant in stimulating service quality, but also the most significant. This sends a signal that unless service providers engage in customer needs generation, they will find difficulty to improve service quality. This research elaborates that customer needs generation has the capacity of increasing the intensity at which service quality is improved since it entails proper understanding of customers' needs and implementation of after-sales services. Therefore, understanding customers' needs is essential for delivering excellent services. Using this information can help service providers to tailor their service and product offerings accordingly. The implication is that service quality is inevitable,

although it is customer-oriented. The study findings affirm that service providers need to clearly understand customer needs such that services are tailored to meet customer tastes and preferences.

5.4 Recommendations

NWSC should intensively engage in customer needs generation activities so as to improve service quality. Indeed, NWSC needs to frequently carry out market surveys pertaining their services, highly value customer feedback and engage in carrying out after-sales-service. These components will enable NWSC to tailor its services to suit customer needs and demand. With this, NWSC will acquire an extra edge of effectively meeting customer priorities and engaging in exhaustive innovations which eventually will improve service quality.

NWSC should thoroughly involve in a wide range of information disseminating activities. The institution should keep customers updated about the services, provide them with a clear and friendly channel of accessing information pertaining the services offered, as well as regularly availing customers with information about future plans and prospects regarding the services. This will allow modifications and adjustments to improve services quality.

Customer responsiveness should be enhanced among NWSC customers in order to improve service quality. NWSC should quickly act upon customers complaints, avail them with instant feedback in case of any inquiries, and above all notify customers on the way forward pertaining inquiries raised. This will guide NWSC in planning and allocation of resources so as improve on the quality of the services they offer.

5.4 Limitations of the study

Much as this study was conducted successfully, it was with specific limitations. First and foremost, the study focused on only NWSC customers to make conclusions. Accordingly, the findings obtained herein are too specific rather than general enough to reflect the influence of customer

orientation on service quality across other service providers which has failed to address reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy issues.

The data used to interpret findings was obtained in a cross-sectional design and therefore, does not consider the changes overtime that occurred to the variables during the data collection exercise.

5.5 Areas for further study

The researcher suggests the following issues for further understanding of service quality;

Other researchers should investigate the relationship between customer orientation and service quality from a broader perspective. The study could look at least more than one particular service provider to enhance generalizability of results.

A similar study about the relationship between customer orientation and service quality should be carried out in a longitudinal design. This will facilitate a comparative analysis between responses.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire form

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a student of Makerere University undertaking a research study on **"***Customer Orientation and Service Quality among National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) Customers in Kampala***"** as a requirement of the award of a degree of Masters. The purpose of this questionnaire is to seek information regarding the subject matter. The information is purely for academic purposes and all answers will be handled with utmost confidentiality. I therefore humbly request that you to complete this questionnaire correctly in the spaces provided or options given. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me on +**256-783-279-037**. Thank you so much for your help.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

In the following questions, you are requested to tick the option that best suits you.

1. **Gender**

Male	Female
1	2

2. **Age**

<25 yrs	26-35 yrs	36-45 yrs	46-55 yrs	56 yrs above
1	2	3	4	5

3. **Highest education level attained**

Primary	Secondary	Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Others
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. **Category of customer**

Commercial	Domestic	Institutional	Industrial	PSP	Kiosk
1	2	3	4	5	6

5. **Years as a customer of NWSC**

Less than a year	1-4 yrs	5-8 yrs	9-12 yrs	13 yrs above
1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please choose only one answer to each question. With reference to customer orientation, you are requested to tick one option with guidance from the defined scale.

SCALE: 1-*Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Not sure; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree.*

	CUSTOMER ORIENTATION					
	Customer needs generation					
CN1	NWSC understands what I want.	1	2	3	4	5
CN2	NWSC encourages me to discuss my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
CN3	NWSC frequently carries out a survey to solicit information pertaining the services they offer.	1	2	3	4	5
CN4	NWSC highly values feedback I provide pertaining the services they offer to me.	1	2	3	4	5
CN5	After-sales-service constitutes an important aspect in NWSC.	1	2	3	4	5
	Information dissemination					
ID1	NWSC keeps me up to date with information related to the service they offer to me.	1	2	3	4	5
ID2	NWSC provides clear channel through which I can obtain whichever information I need.	1	2	3	4	5
ID3	NWSC's channels through which information is disseminated are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
ID4	NWSC suggests the most suitable service that meets my specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5
ID5	NWSC provides regularly avails information updates regarding its services & plans.	1	2	3	4	5
	Customer responsiveness					
CR1	NWSC quickly acts upon any complaints I raise.	1	2	3	4	5
CR2	NWSC provides me with instant feedback regarding any inquiries I raise.	1	2	3	4	5
CR3	NWSC encourages me to always provide feedback.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C:

CR4	NWSC always notifies me on the way forward to the issues I raise.	1	2	3	4	5
CR5	NWSC responds to my concerns within the time it promises to do so.	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: Please choose only one answer to each question. With reference to service quality, you are requested to tick one option with guidance from the defined scale.

SCALE: 1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Not sure; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree.

	Tangibles					
TA1	NWSC staff are always presentable while on duty.	1	2	3	4	5
TA2	The tools (taps, billing meter etc.) used by NWSC are long lasting.	1	2	3	4	5
TA3	It is easy to find NWSC branches.	1	2	3	4	5
TA4	Opening hours of NWSC branches are favorable to me.	1	2	3	4	5
TA5	The sign posts for NWSC clearly exposes the location of the branches.	1	2	3	4	5
TA6	The offices for NWSC are visually appealing	1	2	3	4	5
	Reliability					
RE1	NWSC sticks to what it promises.	1	2	3	4	5
RE2	Whenever I am encountered with a problem, NWSC shows sincere intention to solve it.	1	2	3	4	5
RE3	NWSC provides their services right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
RE4	NWSC provides timely monthly bills for the water I consume.	1	2	3	4	5
RE5	NWSC offers efficient water connection.	1	2	3	4	5
RE6	NWSC has convenient options through which I can pay my monthly bills.	1	2	3	4	5
RE7	NWSC offers reliable water supply to my premises.	1	2	3	4	5
	Empathy					
EM1	NWSC gives me personal attention.	1	2	3	4	5
EM2	NWSC has my best interest at heart.	1	2	3	4	5

EM3	NWSC offers me special care.	1	2	3	4	5
EM4	NWSC easily interact with me.	1	2	3	4	5
EM5	NWSC are fair when resolving my issues.	1	2	3	4	5
	Assurance					
AS1	I believe that staff of NWSC are knowledgeable enough to perform their duties well.	1	2	3	4	5
AS2	I think that staff of NWSC are polite.	1	2	3	4	5
AS3	I think staff of NWSC get adequate support to do their jobs well.	1	2	3	4	5
AS4	NWSC staff are courteous to me.	1	2	3	4	5
AS5	NWSC staff execute their work with integrity	1	2	3	4	5
	Responsiveness					
RES1	The NWSC staff responds to requests within the required time frame.	1	2	3	4	5
RES2	The NWSC staff is willing to go an extra mile while executing tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
RES3	I think the staff of NWSC acts in accordance to customers' suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5
RES4	NWSC staff solves customer problems swiftly.	1	2	3	4	5
RES5	The staff of NWSC always gives individual attention to every customer.					

Thank you so much for your time!