

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE COURIER SERVICES SECTOR IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of Total Quality Management and its impact on performance within the Zimbabwean courier services sector. The mixed research approach was used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. Out of a sample of 220 respondents drawn from four courier service companies, the findings revealed that courier firms in Harare consider TQM as a cost which is difficult to implement given their financial constraints, but they are aware of its importance in achieving competitive advantage. The study also found out that insufficient resources, lack of management commitment, lack of appropriate training and poor planning are the barriers to implementing TQM in the courier services sector. The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between implementation of TQM and company performance. It was recommended that in order to improve performance and increase viability and impact, courier services companies should fully adopt TQM including its SERVQUAL Model as a way of attaining competitive advantage. It was further recommended that courier services companies should address the barriers that hinder the adoption of TQM in order to succeed in producing superior goods and services.

Key words: *TQM, Total Quality Management, Quality, Service Quality, Service Assurance,*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A quality product or service should meet or exceed customer expectations. When quality service delivery and continuous improvement become habit and culture at all levels of the organization from shop-floor to top management - that becomes Total Quality Management (TQM). Quality is increasingly becoming the most important factor in achieving competitive advantage in today's business environment which is characterized by cut-throat competition, globalization and economic liberalization making customers spoiled for choice (Chen and Myagmarsuren, 2011). Furthermore, Mansour (2007) asserts that given the uncertainty, volatility and complexity issues associated with the turbulent business environment, successful modern day organizations strive to provide superior goods and services that meet or surpass customer expectations to survive the stiff competition. To attain competitive advantage, Asli et al. (2013) suggest that organizations ought to provide answers to questions: How can we delight customers? What do our customers think about us, our products and services? How can we continuously improve our goods and services to remain on top of the game ahead of the rest of the pack? These questions bring up the important issue of total quality management which is an essential consideration within the courier service sector.

1.1 Background to the study

In recent times, courier companies have been losing some of their customers to competitors. There are wide reports of customers being short-changed within Zimbabwean courier services sector; citing systems failure and poor turnaround time as challenges affecting many companies in this industry continue to mount (The Sunday News, 2014). Industry Psychology Consultants (IPC, 2014) identified poor lead time in delivery, lack of variety, lack of innovation, poor service delivery and poor notifications as the major customer service issues facing Zimbabwean courier services sector (IPC, 2014 and Terblache et al, 2010). Thus, there is need to further investigate the extent to which TQM, through the use of the SERVQUAL model, can be used by organisations in the courier services industry as a strategy for enhancing competitive advantage.

Research showed that customers were very agitated by poor communication, lack of innovative products, deteriorating service quality, poor customer service and poor performance of the courier services sector (IPC, 2014). Great managers earn trust from employees, customers, and the community; they help the economy grow, they foster innovation, and cause business results to flourish (MAZ, 2015).

As suggested by Lim and Nelson (2010) quality of services in the courier sector centers on reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy in relation to competitiveness. Rust, Zakorik and Keiningham (2010) assert that the variables for measuring competitiveness within the courier sector include quality, performance, innovation, and customer service.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The global courier services sector is increasingly becoming competitive (Crosby, 2010). In contrast, the Zimbabwean courier services sector continued to face challenges in providing quality service to consumers, a thing which has affected their competitiveness. With regards to quality, several researches have tried to assess the significance of service quality on competitiveness. Within the courier services sector, total quality management (TQM) was viewed as ensuring reliability of service, responsiveness to customer requests, assurance of quality service, tangibility and empathy. There was need for a study which assessed the impact of TQM on competitiveness. This study sought to investigate the impact of TQM using the SERVQUAL model (Service Quality model) as a strategy for enhancing competitive advantage within the courier sector.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research was to determine the impact of total quality management on competitiveness within the Zimbabwean courier services sector. The sub-objectives were:

- 1.3.1 To assess the impact of responsiveness and competitiveness within the Zimbabwean courier services sector.
- 1.3.2 To ascertain if service quality and assurance influence competitiveness within the Zimbabwean courier services sector.
- 1.3.3 To determine if the use of technology within the courier services sector enhances company competitiveness.

1.4 Hypotheses

H1: There is an association between adopting TQM (formally or informally) and company performance.

H2: There is a positive relationship between having a TQM policy and company performance as measured by total sales revenue per year.

H3: There is an association between successful implementation of TQM and company performance as measured by total sales revenue per year.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Meaning of Total Quality Management (TQM)

While total quality management is widely practiced in organizations, there is little agreement on what it actually involves, despite assertions that clear definitions are important (Boaden, 2011). Many researchers from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines have investigated total quality management and have couched their own definitions and perspectives. The adjective 'total' is used to indicate company-wide application (Conti, 2013). The use of the word 'total', when coupled with the term 'quality management', provides recognition of the fact that total quality management is not an activity that can be confined to certain organizational processes (Anantharaman, 2011). Total quality management therefore, implies the mutual co-operation of everyone in the organization to produce superior products and or services which meet and hopefully exceed the needs and expectations of customers.

Total quality management is a theory which emphasizes the understanding of variation; the importance of measurement; the role of internal and external customers and suppliers and the involvement of employees at all levels of the organization in pursuit of continuous improvement (Chang, 2016). Ganapavarapu (2015) asserts that TQM is a set of beliefs and principles employed to improve processes in a quest to meet and surpass customer needs. Total quality management is a management approach that focuses on quality and customer satisfaction and benefits the organization and society (Blery et al., 2009).

Total Quality Management is a management philosophy that acknowledges the fact that customer expectations are inseparable from corporate goals (Andreassen, 2005). TQM, as described by Hashmi (2010), is a system by which management and employees participate in continuous improvement of products and services. It comprises of quality and management tools designed to enhance business and cut on losses caused by wasteful practices. Blery et al., (2009) further attest that the concept of TQM alludes to the culture and attitudes of employee participation to provide customers with the type of goods and services that meet their needs. According to Filip (2011), total quality management is a strategy and management tool that seeks to satisfy customers through continuous improvement. Total quality management can help companies to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Mansour, 2007).

It is not possible to finish defining TQM without mentioning its Japanese 'cousin' – **Kaizen** Philosophy. Kaizen means continuous improvement involving everyone in the organization from top management, to managers, supervisors down to shop-floor workers. This philosophy

assumes that “our way of life – be it our working life, our social life or our home life – deserves to be constantly improved”. Kaizen comes from Japanese words ‘Kai’ and ‘zen’, which translate roughly into ‘to break apart and investigate’ and ‘to improve upon the existing situation’. TQM management also involves this. While Kaizen has become a culture in Japan, TQM should equally become a culture in work places across the world.

In this study and in the concept of courier services industry, the generic term of “total quality management” will therefore be used to mean a vast collection of philosophies, concepts, methods and techniques that are used throughout the world to manage quality. It means having right features, correct documentation, error-free invoices, on-time delivery and no failures.

Total quality management shares features of Scientific Management, Human Relations Management and Management by Objectives (Pheng and Teo, 2014). With Scientific Management, TQM shares a focus on understanding the process involved in production. With Human Relations Theory, total quality management shares a concern for organizational unity. The integration of all parts to achieve set objectives is shared by the Management by Objectives approach (MBO) (Drucker in Palmer and Saunders, 2012).

2.2 Total quality management in the courier services sector

Globally, Total Quality Management (TQM) within the courier services sector is considered as a culture that benefits the institution in terms of competitiveness, flexibility, effectiveness, and efficiency throughout the organization (Zakuan, 2012). Hoang (2010) asserts that in the last couple of years, several researches have shown that total quality management has benefited many institutions through improvement in the quality of products and services to customers.

Bryslan and Curry (2011) characterize these areas as follows:

- Quality of communication - Do organisations communicate with, listen to and understand service users?
- Quality of specification - Is this understanding converted into clear standards for service delivery?
- Quality of delivery - Are the standards actually delivered and is remedial action taken whenever a service failure occurs?
- Quality of people and systems - Is staff motivated, trained, well managed and supported by good management processes and systems?

Total quality management has been proffered as a route to efficiency and cultural change in the courier services sector. However, if service quality is to be the corner stone of any organizational strategy, there must be a means of measuring it. The focus of such a strategy should be centred on the customer and satisfying customer requirements as well as on the process and on analysing every task or transaction interfacing with the service user to establish requirements (Curry and Herbert, 2008).

2.3 Benefits of Total Quality Management

According to Lau (2010) total quality management was adopted for various reasons to gain certain benefits and these include; overriding concerns for quality for certifications from boards regarding quality assurance (Corredor, 2010); enhancing competitiveness and giving a competitive advantage over rivals (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In addition, Chingang and Lukong (2010) assert that TQM enhances the achievement of customer satisfaction which

leads to retention of new customers. In support, Juwahweer and Kassen (2006) proclaim that TQM contributes to organisational growth and improves the reputation of the company.

Within the courier services sector, TQM is considered as a culture that benefits the institution in terms of competitiveness, flexibility, effectiveness and efficiency throughout the organization (Zakuan, 2012).

2.4 Challenges encountered in implementing Total Quality Management

Derminbag (2006) eludes that challenges in implementing TQM include inadequate human resources that support successful implementation. Ibid (2006) further highlights that there is evidence of lack of understanding and lack of proper training that exists at all levels of the organization.

2.5 Quality

Quality is defined and interpreted in many ways. Quality in the provision of service is a fundamental element that not only seeks to address the needs of the customer but also to enhance the accuracy in the delivery of service to the expectation of the client (Tjiptono, 2012).

2.6 Service quality in the courier services sector

Chingang and Lukong (2010) define service quality as the discrepancy between customer perceptions of services offered by a courier services provider and their expectations. Valarie Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman and Leonard Berry developed and implemented the Service Quality Model or SERVQUAL Model in America in 1988 and it was well received. It is a method to capture and measure the service quality experienced by customers (Arisi, 2015 and Boyne, 2012).

Within the courier services sector, customers have expectations of the service they want to receive (Felix 2017). Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest and debate in the research literature because of the difficulties in both defining it and measuring it (Wisniewski, 2014). Service quality can thus be defined as the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman et al., 2011; Lewis and Mitchell, 2010). Always there exists an important question: Why should service quality be measured? Measurement allows for comparison before and after changes. Edvardsen *et al.* (2014) state that in their experience, the starting point in developing quality of services is analysis and measurement.

Quality is satisfactory when perceived service confirmed expectations and this leads to SERVQUAL model (Service quality). Parasuraman (2010) mentioned that service quality can be assessed through the following ten criteria and dimensions; reliability, responsiveness, competence, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding or knowing the customer and tangibility. Parasuraman et al (2012) later introduced only five dimensions which are often referred to as RATER; which stands for **R**eliability, **A**ssurance, **T**angibles, **E**mpathy and **R**esponsiveness in pursuit of service quality.

Parasuraman et al (2010) assert that customers inadvertently use the five dimensions on the SERVQUAL scale every time they judge the quality of service. The SERVQUAL approach contains a questionnaire that evaluates the five generic service dimensions or factors through

22 questions, evaluating both expectation and performance using a seven point Likert scale. This approach evaluates service quality by calculating the difference (gap) between customer expectations and perceptions (service quality= P – E). 'P' denotes customer perception of service or performance and 'E' denotes expectations (Lewis and Booms, 1983; Parasuraman et al.2010). If the answer is negative, then dissatisfaction occurs, if positive, then Service Quality is deemed as achieved.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

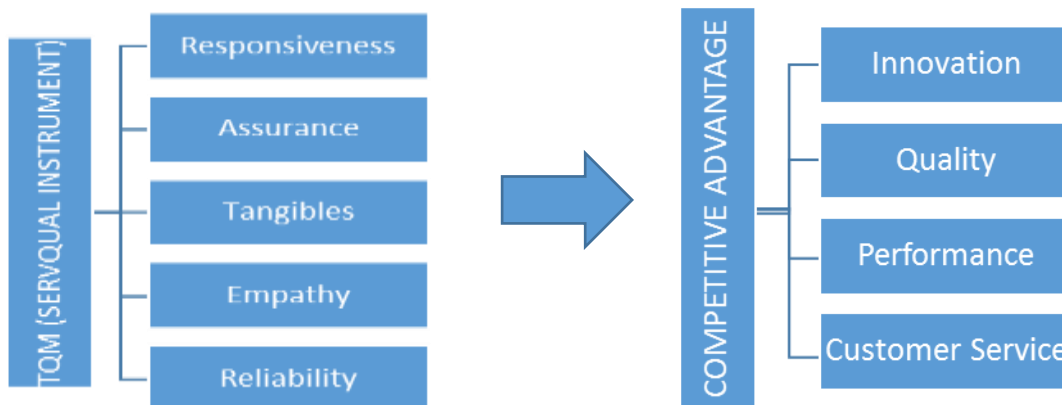


Figure 1 Source: Researcher (2018)

Researchers like Lis (2011) established that there is a relationship between TQM on one side and reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility on the other. Furthermore, Salisbury (2010) asserts that there is a relationship between TQM and competitiveness.

3.0 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the mixed approach was used. Mayor *et al* (2013) view mixed research as the practice of collecting and analyzing data through combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies within a single cohesive study for the purpose of gaining a more holistic understanding of a specific research problem or area of study. The questionnaires were used to collect data for quantitative research while interview questions were open-ended and this allowed for in-depth analysis to be achieved by providing the opportunity to the interviewer to probe further soliciting for clarifications on responses to get insights to views and responses. The study hinged on positivism (for quantitative approaches) and Interpretivism (for qualitative approaches). According to Greener (2008), the use of multiple research designs has the ability to compensate for inherent method weakness, capitalize on inherent method strengths and offset inevitable method biases.

3.1 Population

The target population of employees in the four courier companies under study was 600.

3.2 Sampling

Computations to get representative sample size were done using the Raosoft sample size calculator (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>), where a population of 600 at 95% confidence level, allowing for a margin of error of 5% and assumed response rate of 60% gave a sample size of 229 employees who were picked using Purposive sampling. The questionnaires were distributed to 229 respondents of which 220 completed and returned

thereby achieving a response rate of 96% which was a high response rate. The respondents were distributed as follows:

Table 1: Courier firms under study and the sampled respondents

Class	Sample
DHL	56
FEDEX	40
ZIMPOST	37
SWIFT	87
TOTAL	220

3.3 Pilot-Testing of Questionnaires

Questionnaires were pilot-tested in order to unearth irregularities and vagueness in the questionnaire stems. Convenient sampling technique was utilized to select respondents for this exercise. Remenyi *et al.*, (2009) advised researchers to always pre-test questionnaires before administering to respondents in a field setting as this would uncover ambiguity, lack of clarity, or biases in question wording which need to be eliminated. The pilot study was done in Chinhoyi with fifteen participants and the minor areas needing correction were identified and attended to.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Types of markets served

The Table below shows the various types of markets served by respondents within the four courier firms in Harare. The markets ranged from local, national and export.

Table 2: Types of markets served by the courier firms under study

Types of market served					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local	70	33	33	33
	National	115	55	55	88
	Export	25	12	12	100.0

The Table above shows that 70 (33%) of the respondents served the local market and this referred to markets within Harare, 115 (55%) served the national market which refers to markets outside Harare but within Zimbabwean borders whereas 25 (12%) served the export market.

4.2 Level of understanding TQM

Table 2 shows the level of understanding of the concept of TQM

Level of understanding TQM					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very good	70	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Good	50	23.7	23.7	57
	Fairly good	30	14	14	71
	Poor	48	23	23	94
	Very poor	12	6	6	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

From the Table above, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents (71%) understand the concept of TQM as computed by totaling the responses for fairly good, good and very good. It can be inferred therefore that the answers given on the questionnaires came from respondents who were positively informed in terms of TQM practices.

4.3 Attitudes and customer care

All 210 participants (100%) responded that staff in their organizations had a good attitude towards customers. They claimed that they provide good customer care, individualized attention and employees understand customer needs well; opening hours are convenient to all clients and the organization has clients’ at heart. While this could not be verified through observation, it denoted that the courier organizations under study benefit much by retaining clients through customer-centred staff.

4.4 The responsiveness of the organisation in handling customer queries and complaints

Table 3

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	210	100
No	0	0
Total	210	100.0

As shown on the Table above, all respondents stated that they are responsive in handling customer needs.

4.5 The Impact of TQM

Table 4: Service assurance increases costs of operation in courier firms

Service assurance increases costs					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	36	17	17	17
	Not sure	68	32.3	32.3	49.3
	Sometimes	47	22.3	22.3	71.6
	Always	59	28.4	28.4	100.0

In response to a statement whether service assurance increases costs, only 17% agreed. Therefore the results above seem to show that the majority of employees in courier firms in Harare, Zimbabwe consider TQM as a cost. In support, Henderson (2017) mentioned that the adoption of service assurance by courier firms is likely to increase costs and impair performance, as managers try to take account of a wide range of goals, consult stakeholders and set up new accounting and monitoring systems.

Table 5: Relationship between ways of adopting, implementing TQM and company performance

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	83.079 ^a	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		
a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.45.			

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	-.873	.000
N of Valid Cases		210	
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.			
b. Using asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis			

Table above shows that there is an association between the ways of adopting and implementing TQM (formally or informally) and company performance as measured by sales revenue per year. Gamma -.873 shows a very strong relationship although in the negative. The results show that as methods of implementing TQM in courier firms become more and more formal, sales revenue per year increases.

In an empirical research which was conducted by Orlitzky *et al* (2008) on the relationship between TQM and its impact on the financial performance of the firm, they concluded that there is an association between the methods of implementing TQM and company performance as measured by sales revenue per year. They argued that businesses engage in TQM just as one of many other ways of increasing the firm's performance.

Table 6: Relationship between successful implementation of TQM and company performance

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	59.296 ^a	8	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	58.534	8	.000		
Linear-by-Linear Association	.337	1	.568		
N of Valid Cases	210				
a. 5 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.08.					
		Value	Asymp. Error^a	Std. T^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.039	.106	.358	.720
N of Valid Cases		210			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					

The Table above shows that there is an association between successful implementation of TQM and company performance as measured by sales revenue per year. Gamma 0.039 shows a weak relationship. Brammer and Millington (2008) noted that there are several factors which influence the relationship between implementing TQM and company performance. McWilliams and Siegel (2009) postulated that each company should incorporate TQM differently.

Table 7: Relationship between having a TQM policy and performance

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)		
Pearson Chi-Square	71.799 ^a	4	.000		
N of Valid Cases	210				
a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.05.					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	-.809	.053	-9.879	.000
N of Valid Cases		210			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					

The Table above shows that there is a negative relationship between having a TQM policy and company performance as measured by Gamma -0.809. The results show that having a TQM policy has no beneficial effect on company performance as measured by sales revenue per year.

4.6 Need for a separate department to implement TQM

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they have a separate department that implements TQM. 55 (26%) of the respondents indicated with a YES. The findings help to conclude the adoption and implementation of TQM in courier firms in Harare, Zimbabwe cannot be described as a specialized practice.

4.7 Benefits of TQM

The research sought to investigate the benefits of total quality management. Their responses were as follows:

Table 8

TQM is beneficial to the organization					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very much	65	31	31	31
	Much	85	40	40	71
	I am not sure	19	9	9	80
	Not much	25	12	12	92
	Not at all	16	8	8	100.0

The Table above shows that a total of 150 (71%) of the respondents indicated that they were certain that TQM is beneficial to the organization.

4.8 Barriers to TQM

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the notion that inadequate human resources is a challenge in implementing Total Quality Management. The responses are given below:

Table 9

Inadequate human resources is a challenge of implementing TQM
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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	78	37	37	37
	Agree	46	22	22	59
	Not sure	9	4	4	63
	Disagree	44	21	21	84
	Strongly disagree	33	16	16	100.0
	Total		210	100.0	100.0

The above Table shows that 78 (37%) and 46 (22%) giving a total of 59% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that inadequate human resources is a challenge in the implementation of TQM.

4.9 Lack of proper training

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the notion that lack of proper training is a challenge in implementing TQM.

Table 10

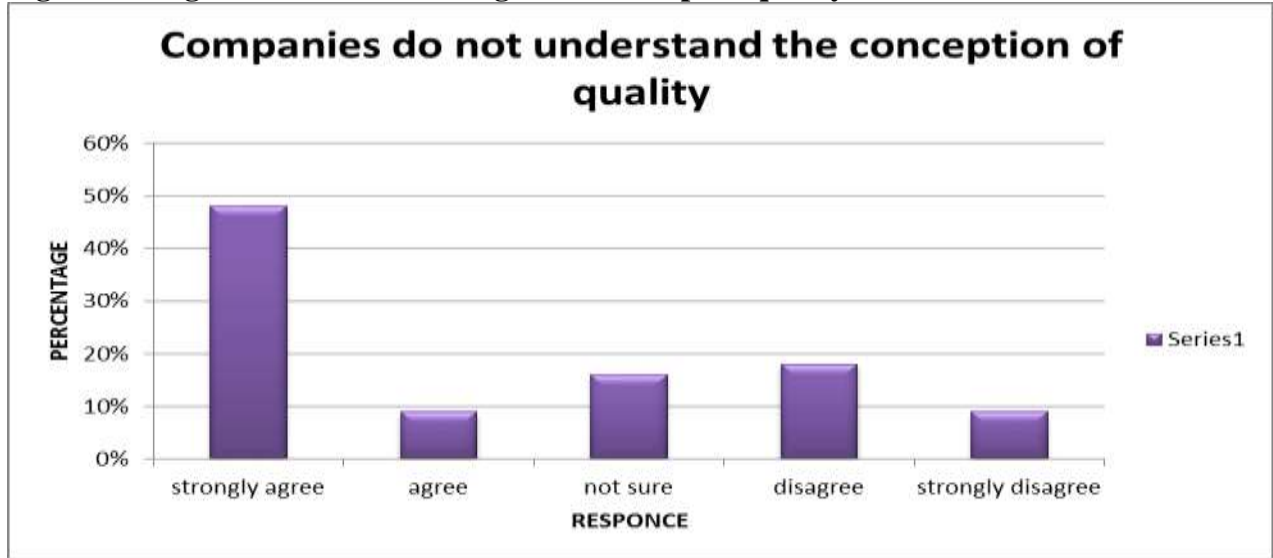
Lack of proper training					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	94	45	45	45
	Agree	50	24	24	69
	Not sure	25	12	12	81
	Disagree	22	10	10	91
	Strongly disagree	19	9	9	100.0
	Total		210	100.0	100.0

The Table above shows that 94 (45%) strongly agreed and 50 (24%) agreed that lack of understanding and proper training is a challenge in implementing TQM. Thus a majority of the respondents 144 or 69% regarded lack of proper training as a barrier in implementing TQM.

4.10 Understanding the concept of quality

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the notion that companies do not understand the concept of quality as a challenge in implementing TQM.

Fig 2: Finding out the understanding of the concept of quality



The Figure above shows that 100 (48%) of the respondents strongly agreed that companies do not understand the concept of quality while 9% (18) agreed to the same giving a total of 57%.

4.11 Barriers in the implementation and development of programmes to achieve TQM

Table 11

Barriers of TQM					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Insufficient resources	60	29	29	29
	Lack of management commitment	35	17	17	46
	Committed human capital	40	19	19	65
	Lack of appropriate training	42	20	20	85
	Poor planning	33	15	15	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

The Table above shows that the rank order of barriers in the implementation of TQM according to respondents is as follows: Insufficient resources, lack of appropriate training, lack of committed human capital, lack of management skills and poor planning.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 This study came to the conclusion that employees and managerial staff in courier firms in Zimbabwe attach many meanings to the concept of TQM.

5.2 Courier services firms under study considered TQM as a cost and this was exacerbated by the fact that the companies are experiencing financial constraints.

5.3 The barriers to the implementation of TQM are insufficient resources, lack of appropriate training, lack of committed human capital, lack of management skills and poor planning.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Courier firms in Harare, should adopt TQM as a way of attaining competitive advantage which leads to production of superior goods and services.

- 6.2 Courier firms in Harare, Zimbabwe should adopt TQM practices to enhance organizational performance.
- 6.3 Courier firms should address the identified barriers that hinder the adoption of TQM.
- 6.4 There should be deliberate effort to educate staff in courier companies about the benefits of adopting TQM as a habit and culture.

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